Gary Bachlund

SONGS OF WAR

FOR BARITONE AND PIANO

Texts of Thomas Hardy, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon,
Isaac Rosenberg, Rudyard Kipling, and Rupert Brooke

2004

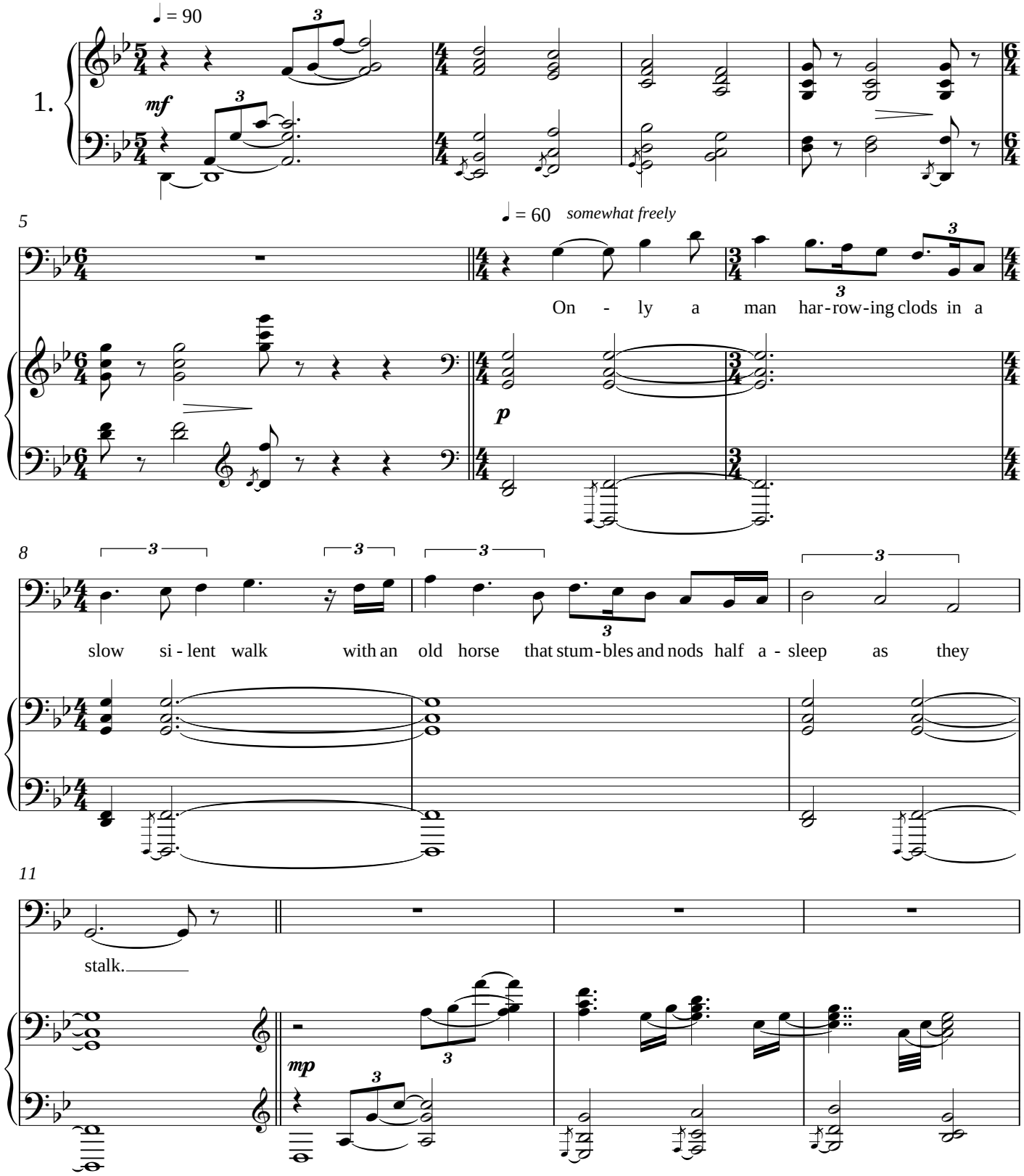
www.bachlund.org

Songs of War

Seven songs for Baritone and Piano

In the Time of the Breaking of Nations

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) Gary Bachlund



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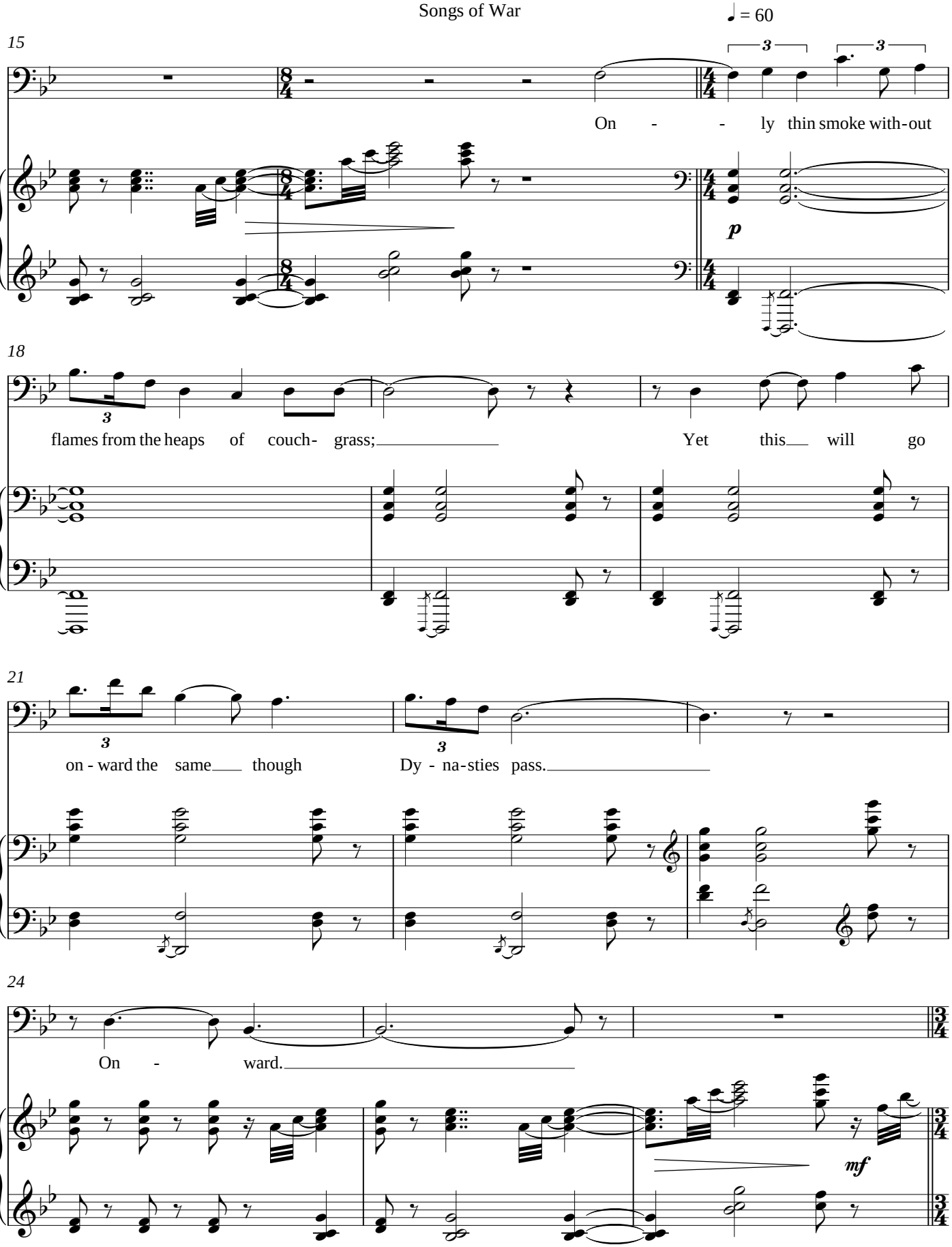
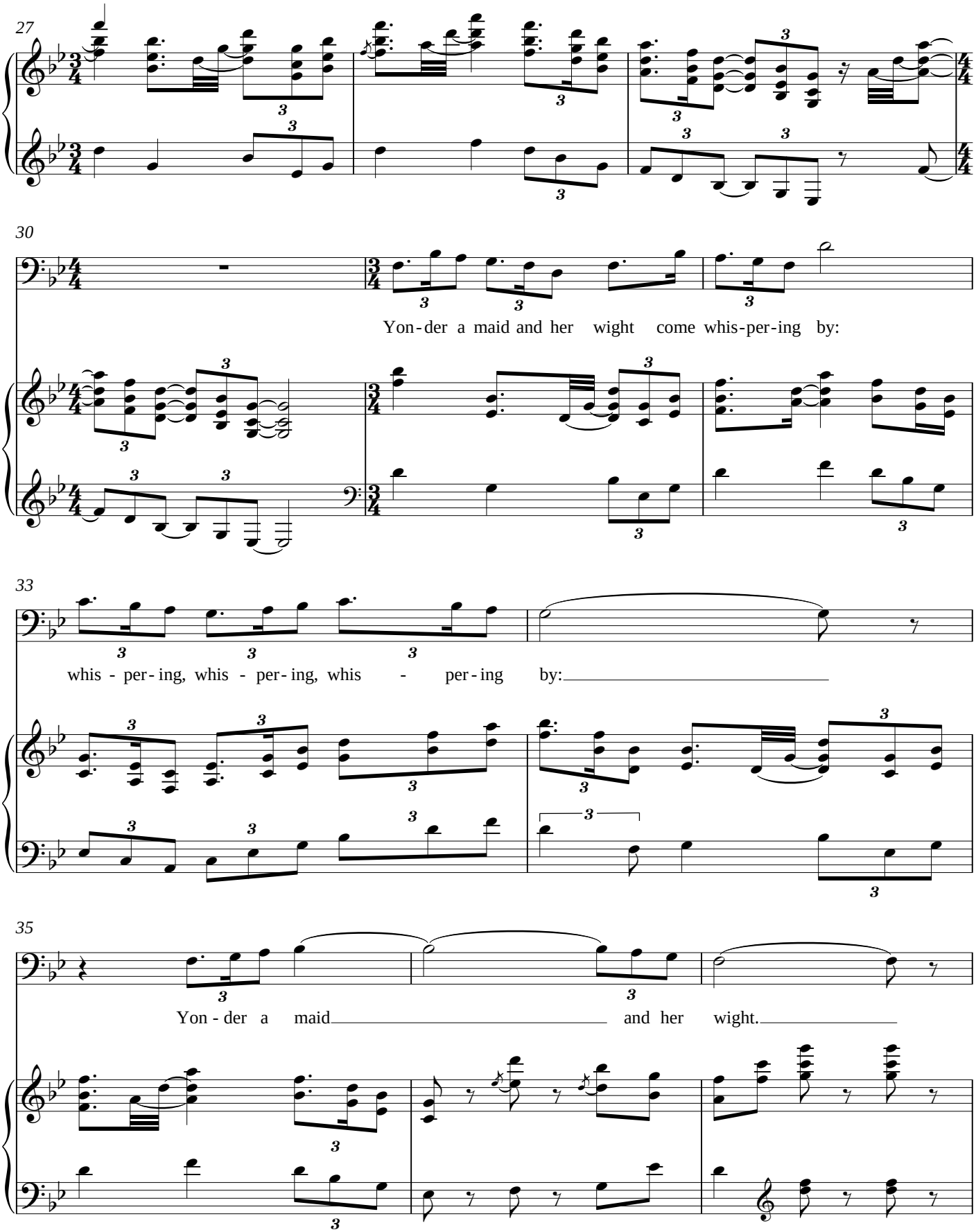
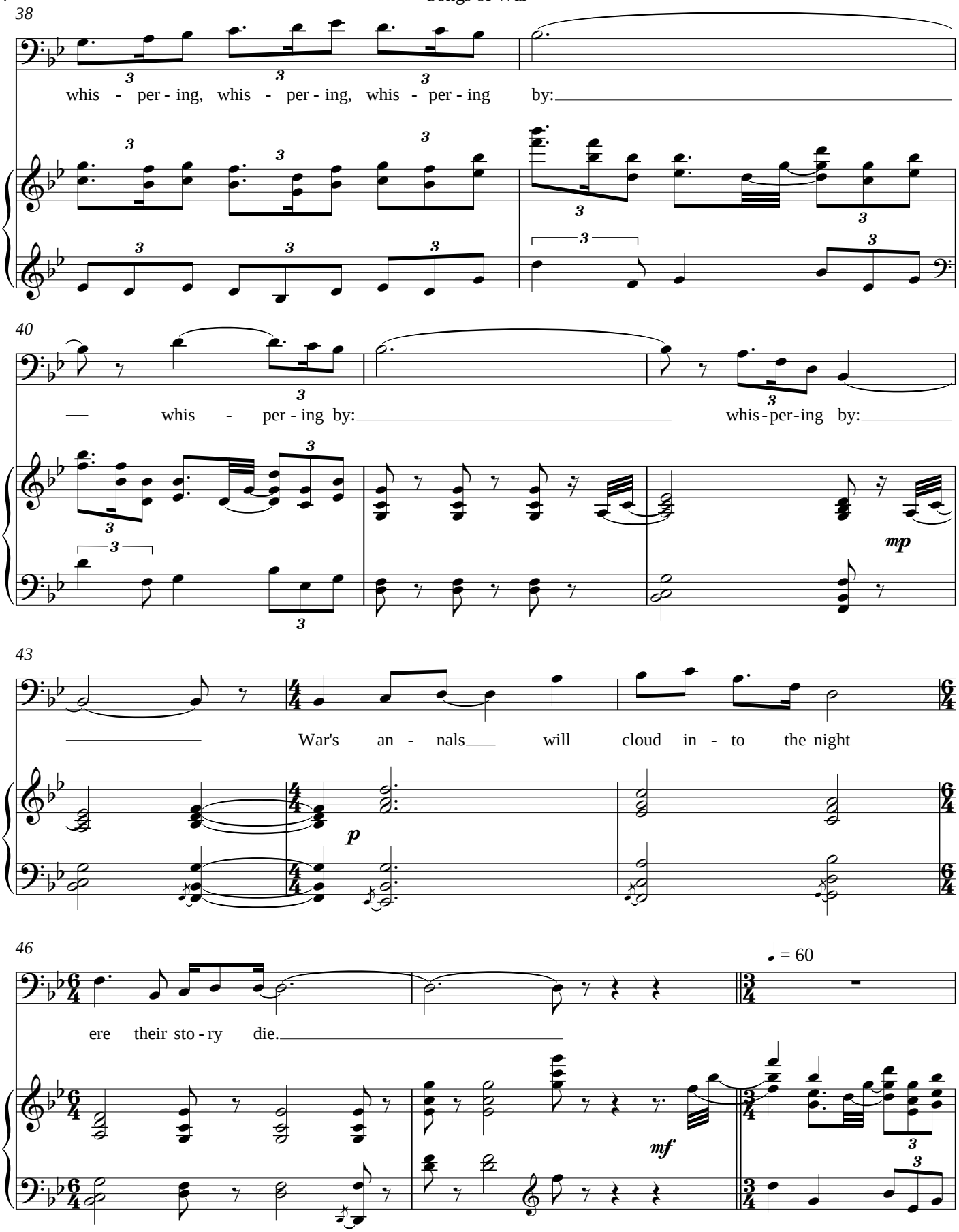
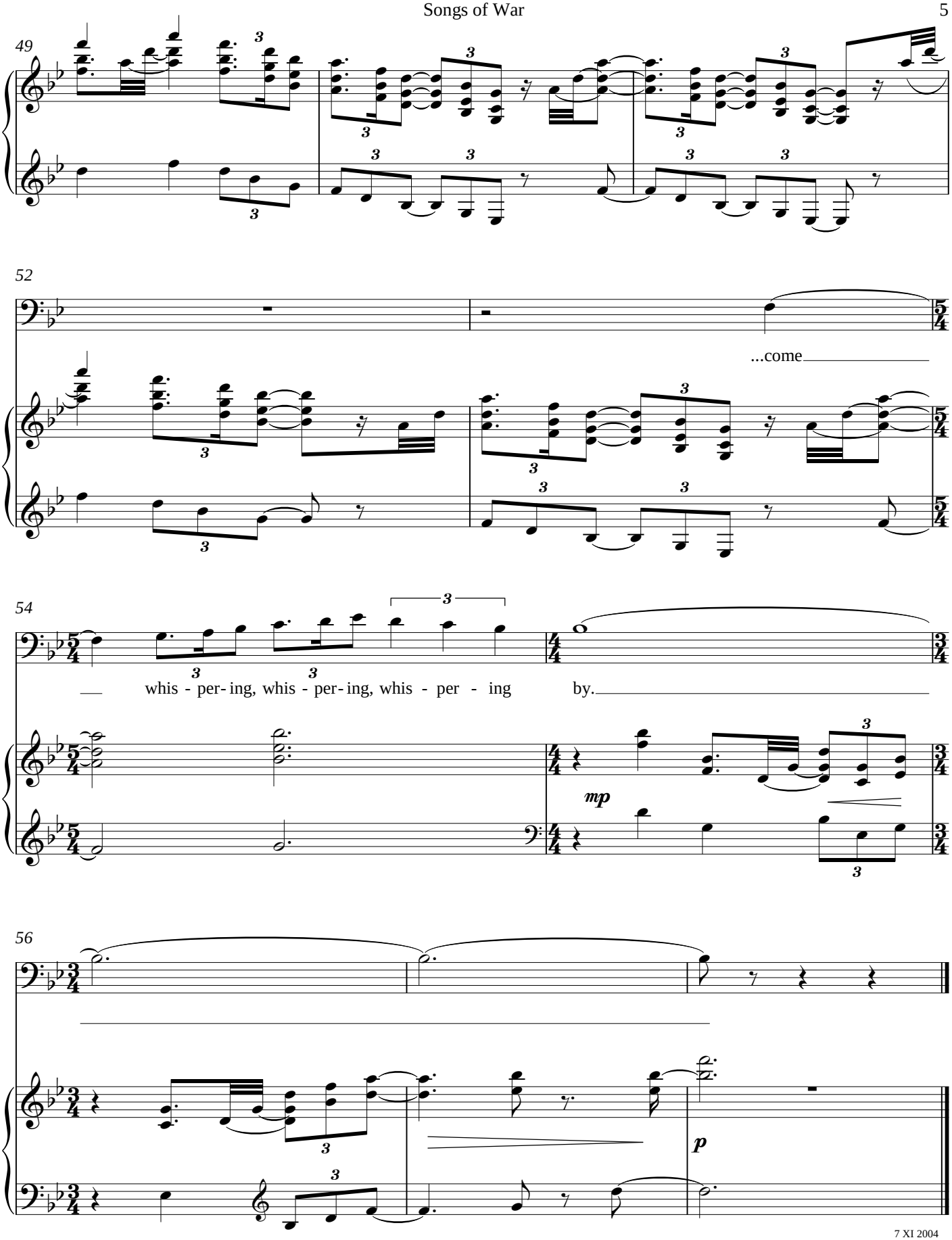

♩ = 60
15
On - - ly thin smoke with-out
p
18
flames from the heaps of couch- grass; Yet this will go
21
on - ward the same though Dy - na-sties pass.
24
On - ward.
mf

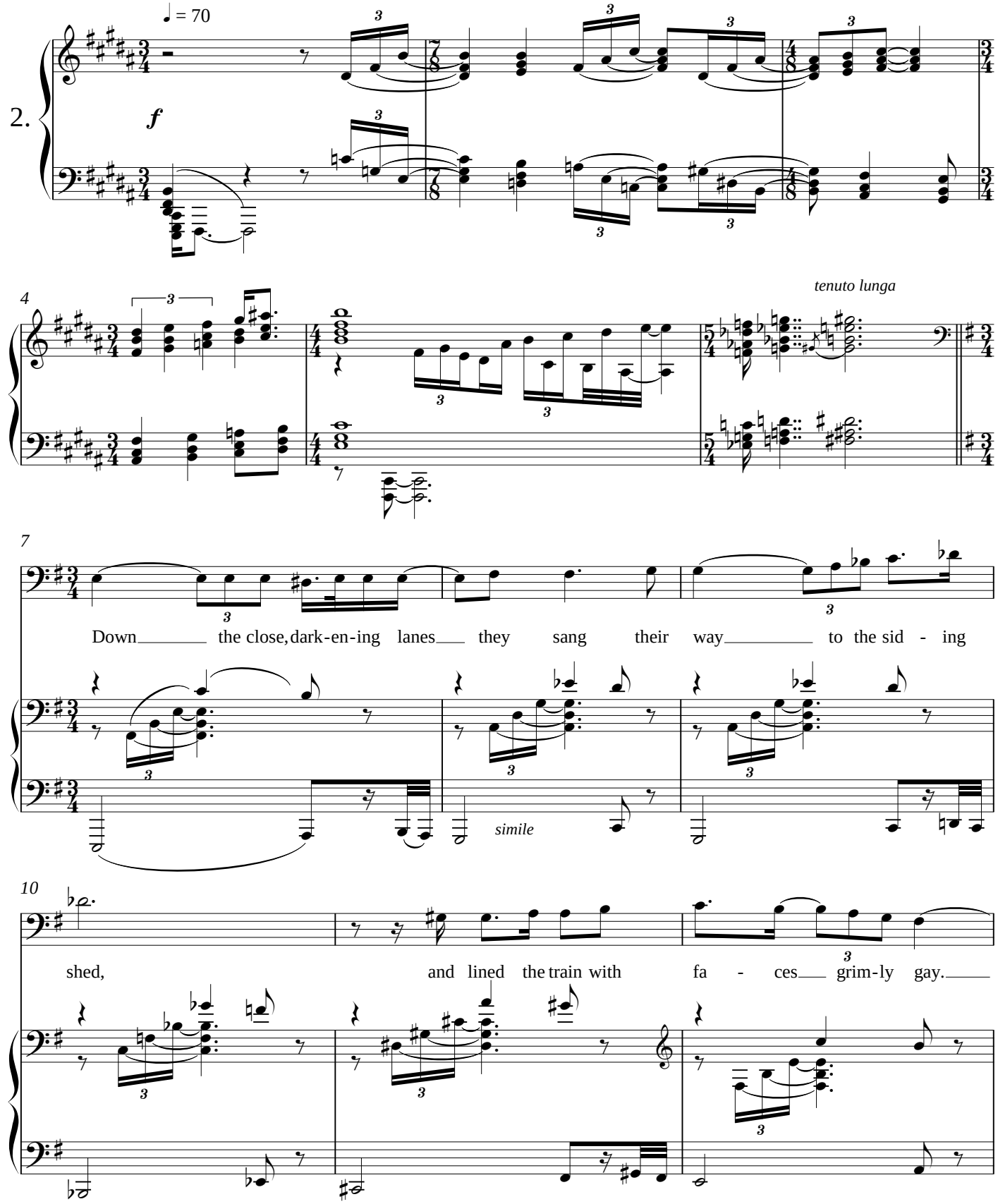

27
30
Yon-der a maid and her wight come whis-per-ing by:
33
whis - per-ing, whis - per-ing, whis - per-ing by:
35
Yon - der a maid and her wight.


38
whis - per - ing, whis - per - ing, whis - per - ing by:
40
whis - per - ing by:
whis - per - ing by:
mp
43
War's an - nals will cloud in - to the night
p
46
ere their sto - ry die.
♩ = 60
mf


49
52
...come
54
whis - per - ing, whis - per - ing, whis - per - ing by.
mp
56
p
circa 3' 30"
7 XI 2004
Verona

The Send-Off

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)



13

Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray

16

as men's are, dead.

mf

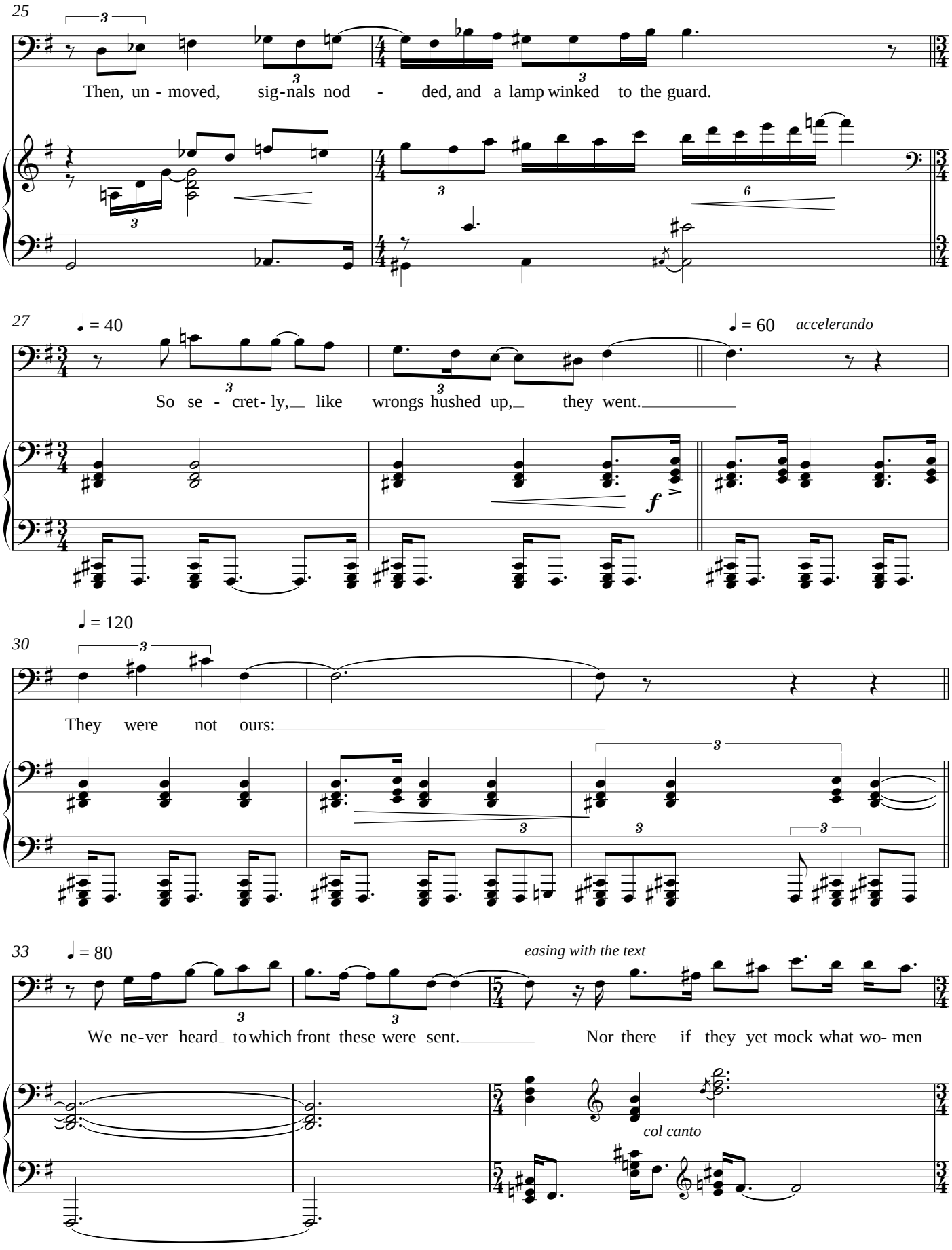
19

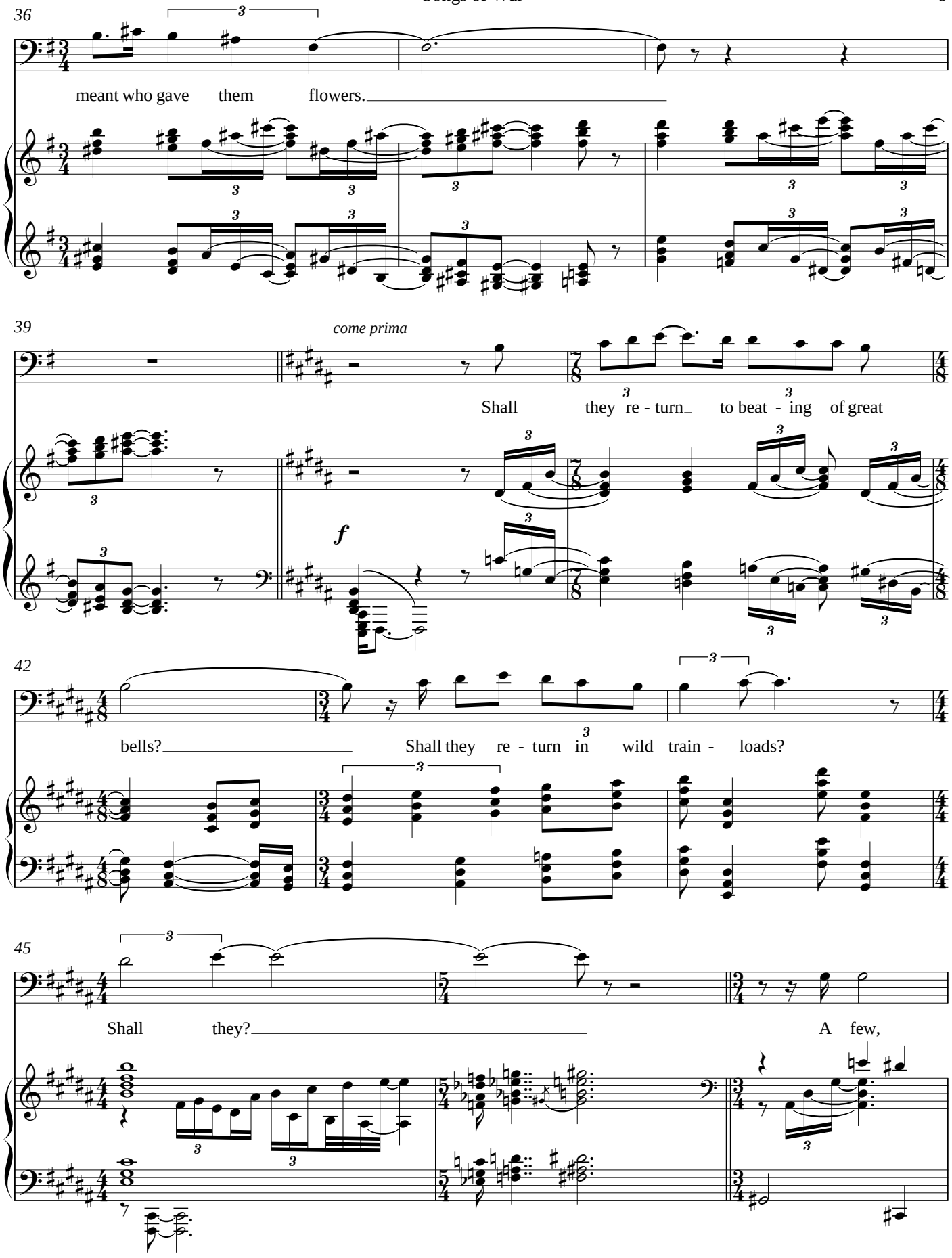
Dull por-ters watched them, and a ca - su-al

p

22

tramp stood star-ing hard sor-ry to miss them at the up - land camp.


25
Then, un - moved, sig-nals nod - ded, and a lamp winked to the guard.
27
♩ = 40
♩ = 60
accelerando
So se - cret- ly, like wrongs hushed up, they went.
f
30
♩ = 120
They were not ours:
33
♩ = 80
easing with the text
We ne-ver heard to which front these were sent. Nor there if they yet mock what wo- men
col canto


36
meant who gave them flowers.
39
come prima
Shall they re - turn to beat - ing of great
f
42
bells?
Shall they re - turn in wild train - loads?
45
Shall they?
A few,

48

a few, too few for drums and yells, may creep back, si-lent to

51

vil-lage wells up half- known roads.

mp

55

♩ = 40 *accelerando to the last three measures*

f

59

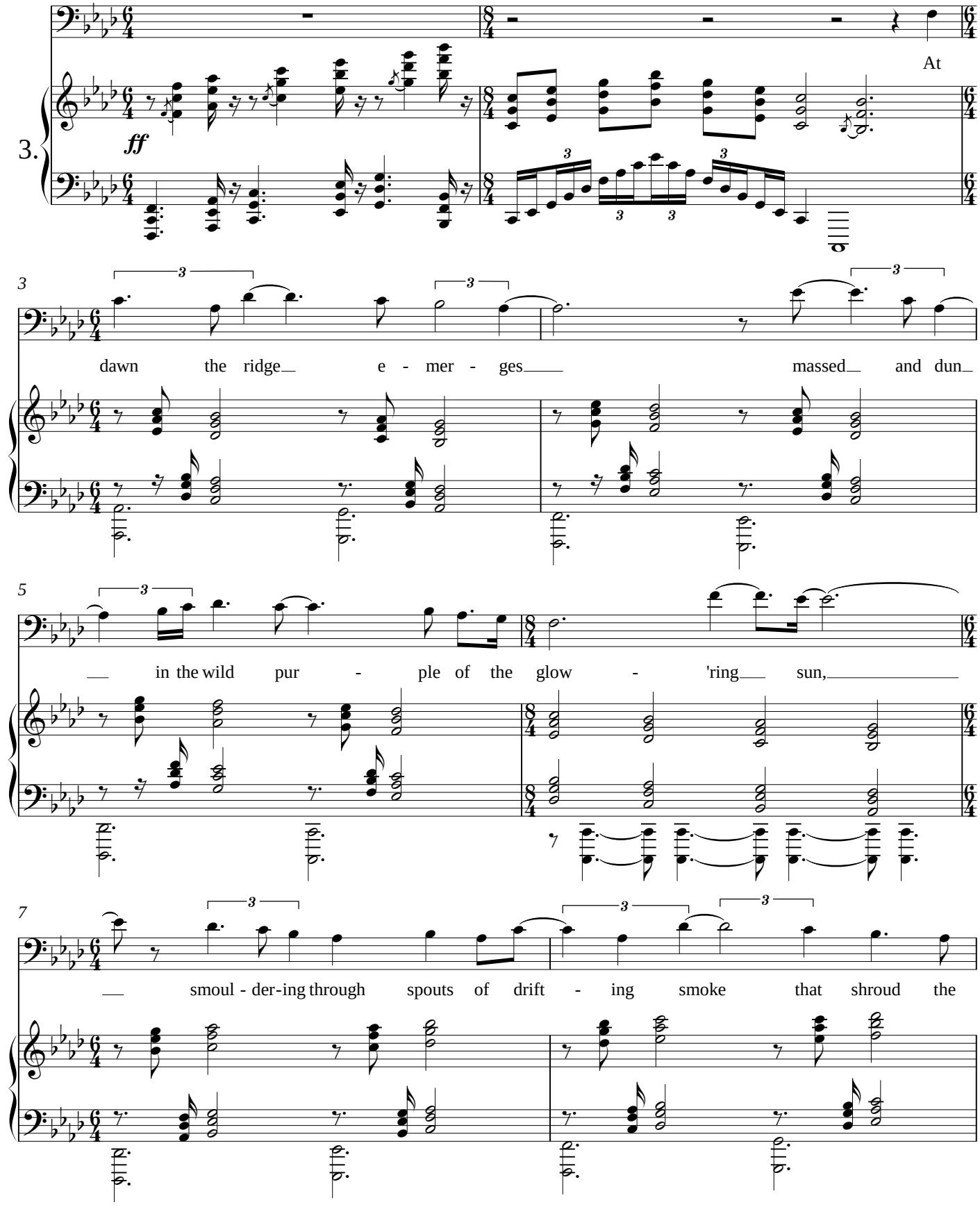
♩ = 160 *molto ritardando to fermata*

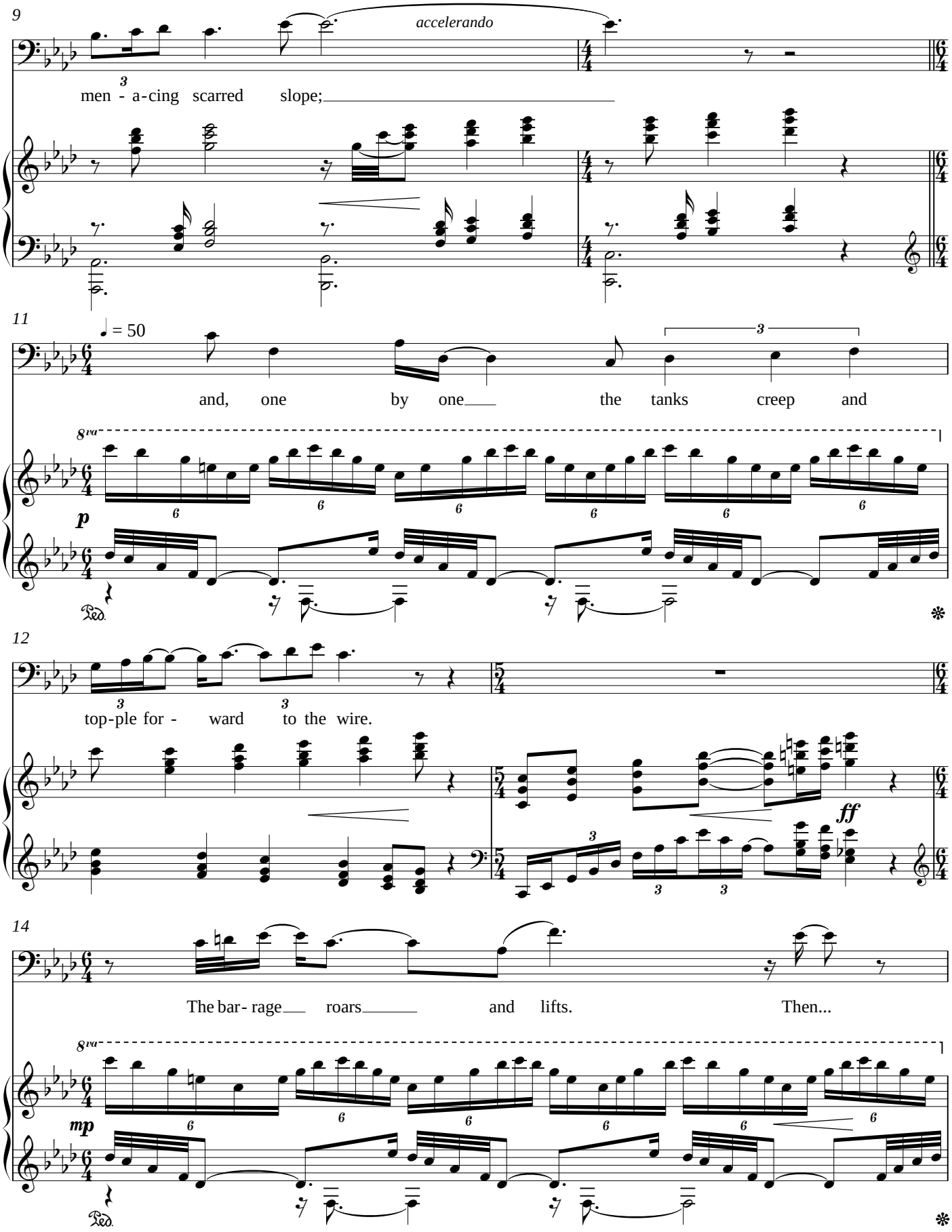
9 X 2004
Verona

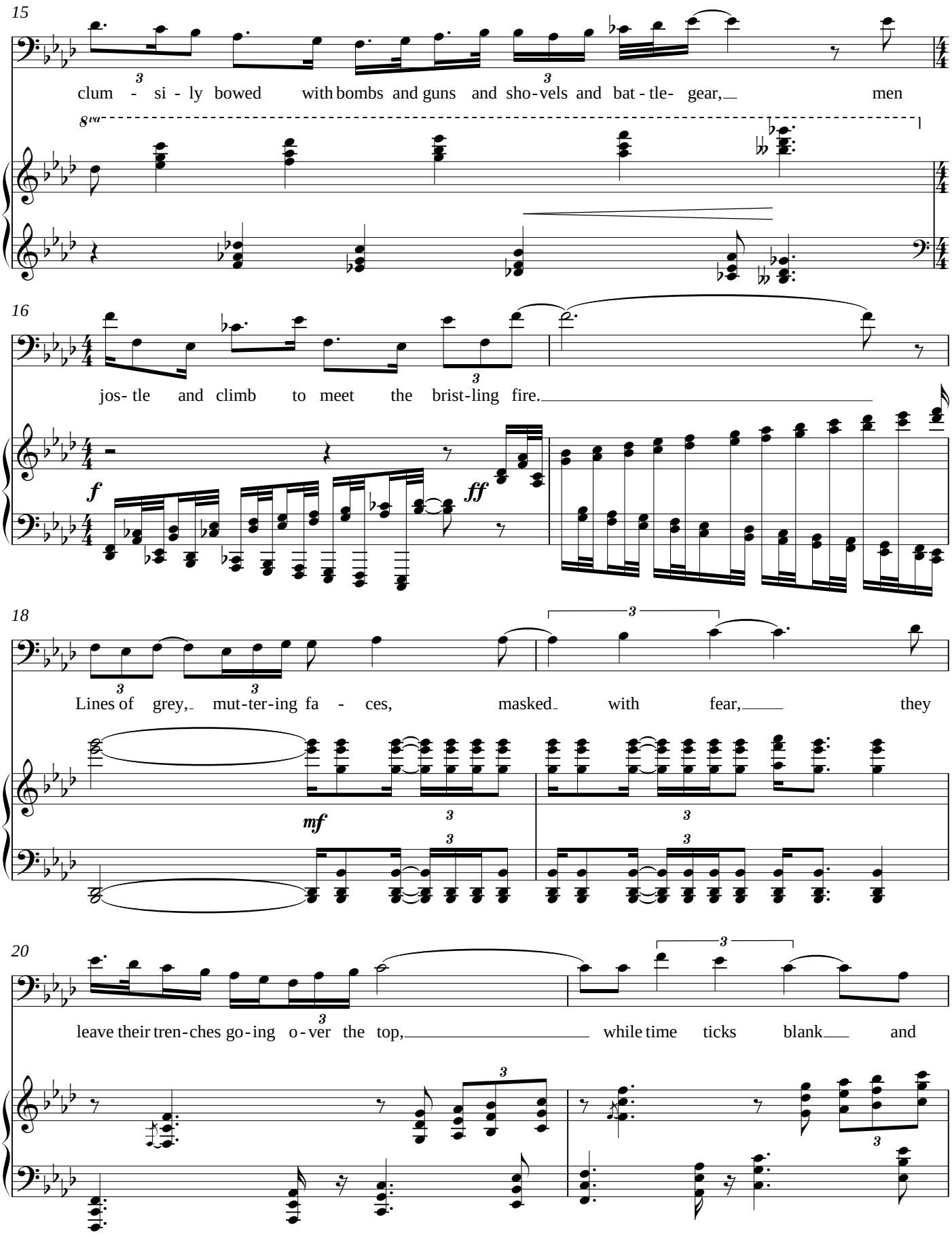
circa 3' 10"

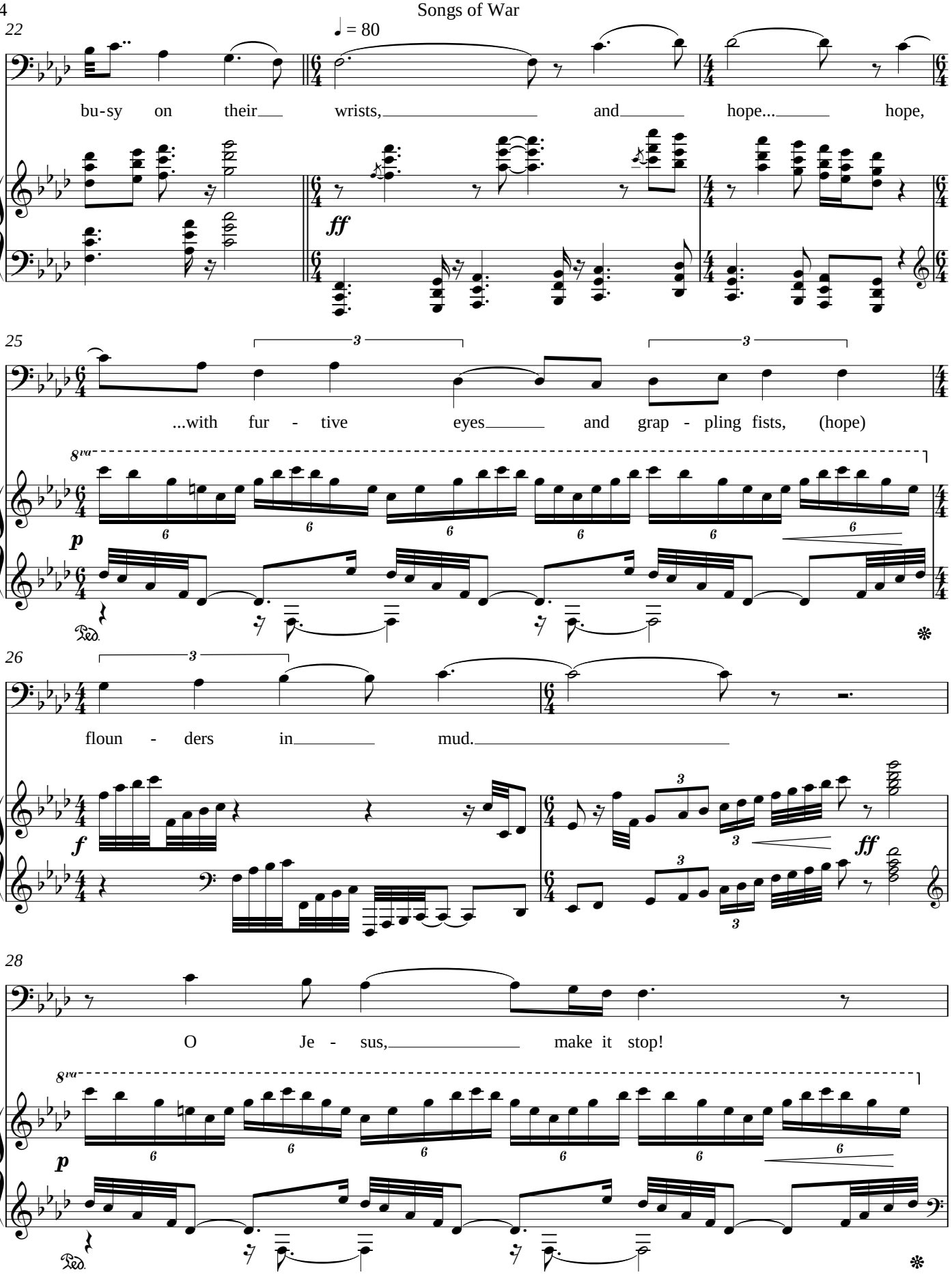
Attack

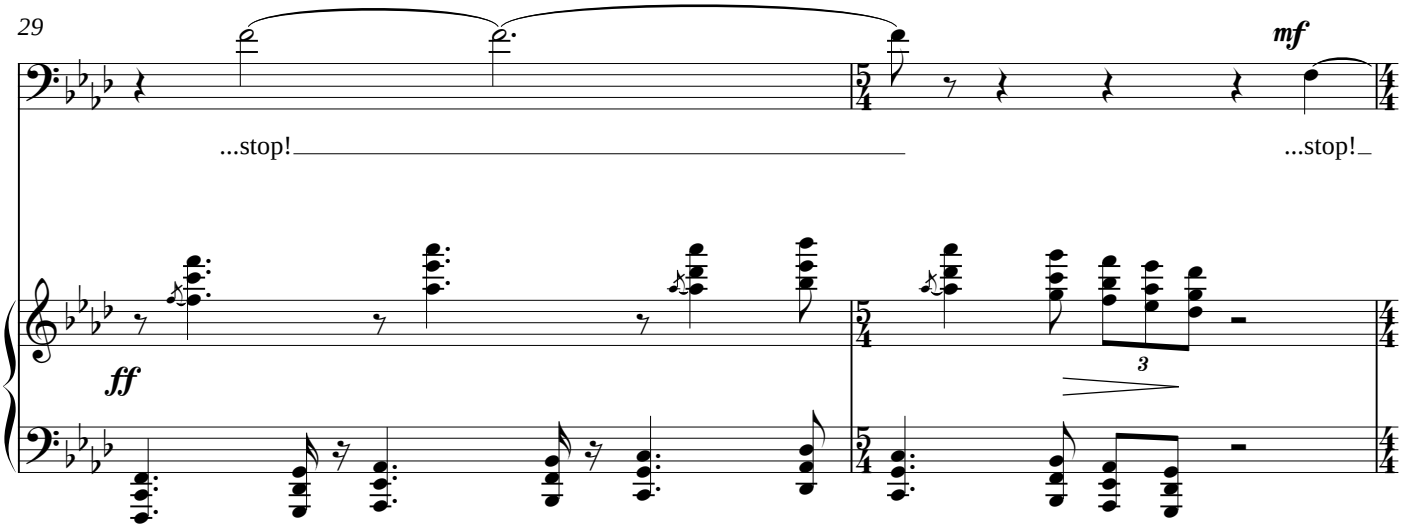
Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967)

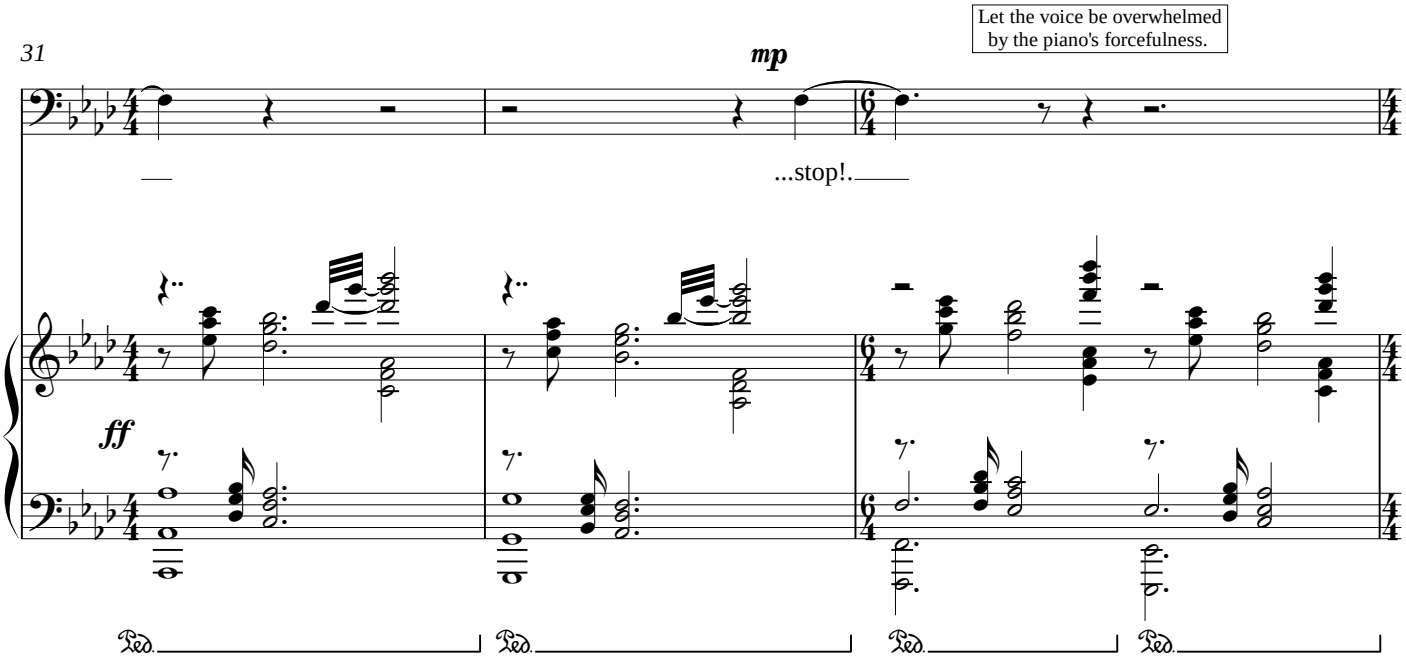


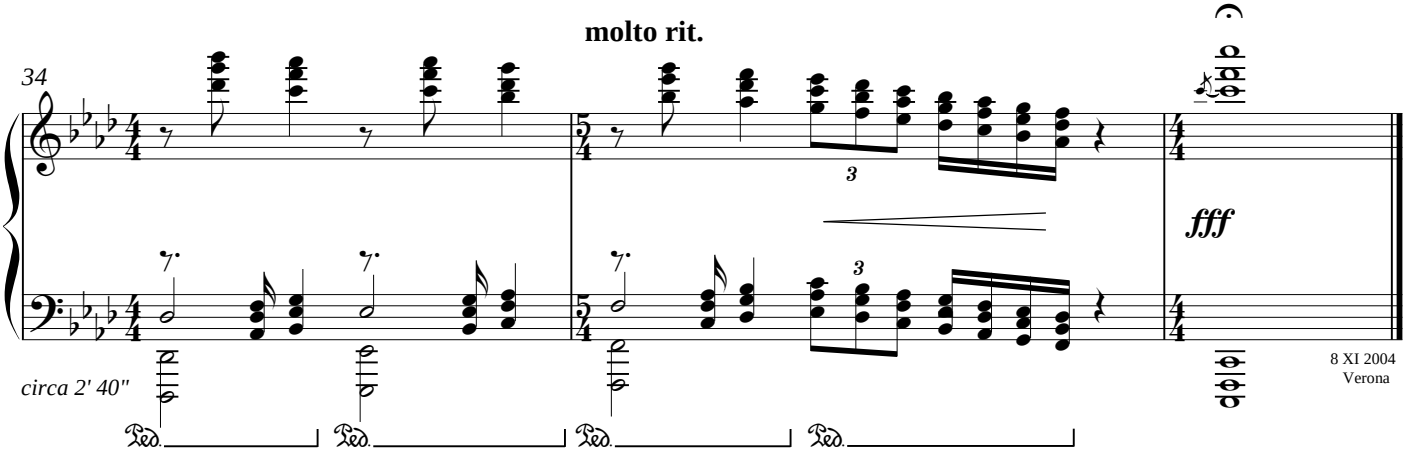

9
accelerando
men - a-cing scarred slope;
11
♩ = 50
and, one by one the tanks creep and
8va
p
Ped.
12
top-ple for - ward to the wire.
ff
14
The bar- rage roars and lifts. Then...
8va
mp
Ped.


15
clum - si - ly bowed with bombs and guns and sho-vels and bat - tle- gear, men
8va
16
jos- tle and climb to meet the brist-ling fire.
f
ff
18
Lines of grey, mut-ter-ing fa - ces, masked with fear, they
mf
20
leave their tren-ches go-ing o-ver the top, while time ticks blank and


22
♩ = 80
bu-sy on their wrists, and hope... hope,
ff
25
...with fur - tive eyes and grap - pling fists, (hope)
8va
p
Ped.
26
floun - ders in mud.
f
ff
28
O Je - sus, make it stop!
8va
p
Ped.


29
mf
...stop!
...stop!
ff
3


Let the voice be overwhelmed by the piano's forcefulness.
31
mp
...stop!.
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


molto rit.
34
3
3
fff
circa 2' 40"
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
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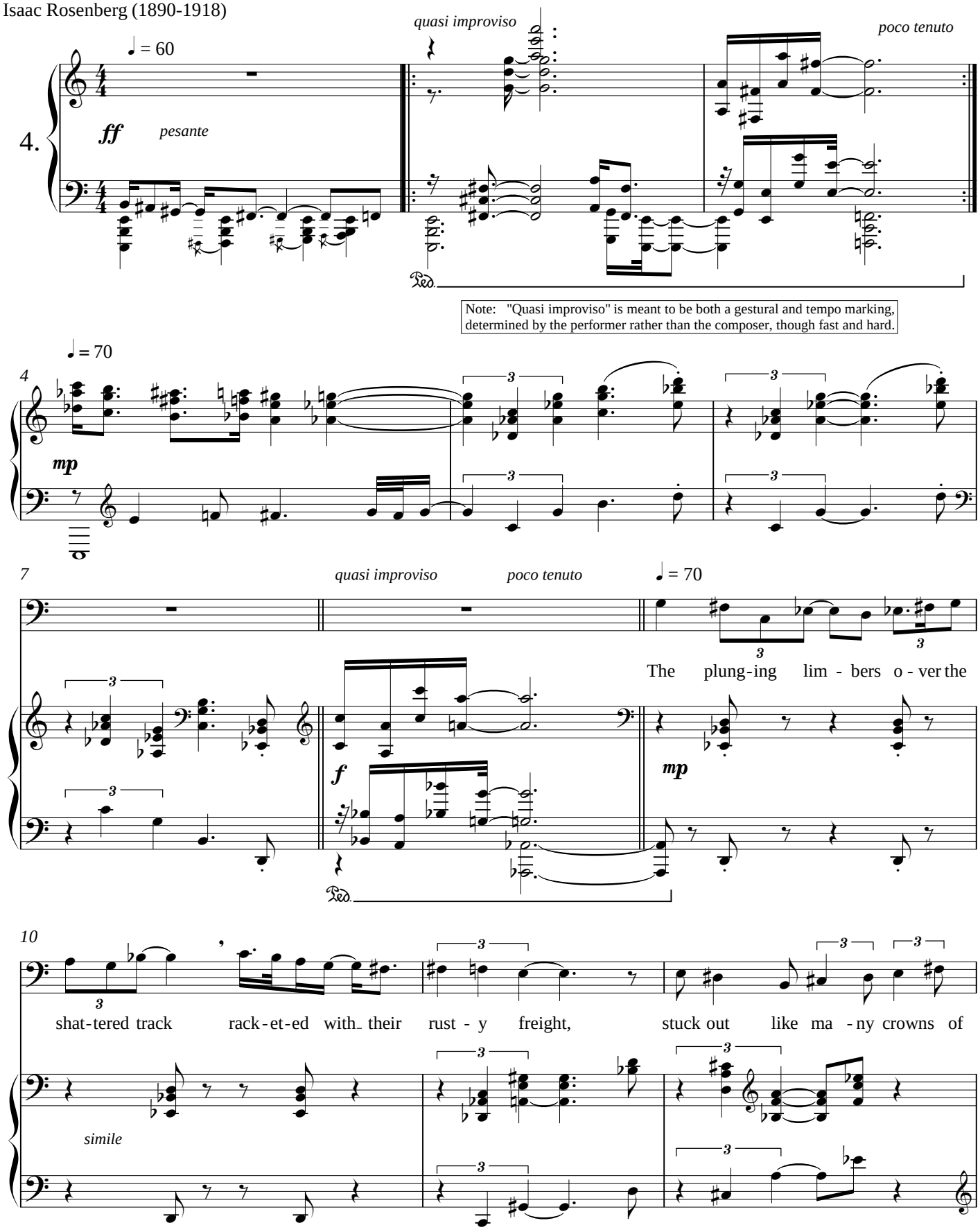
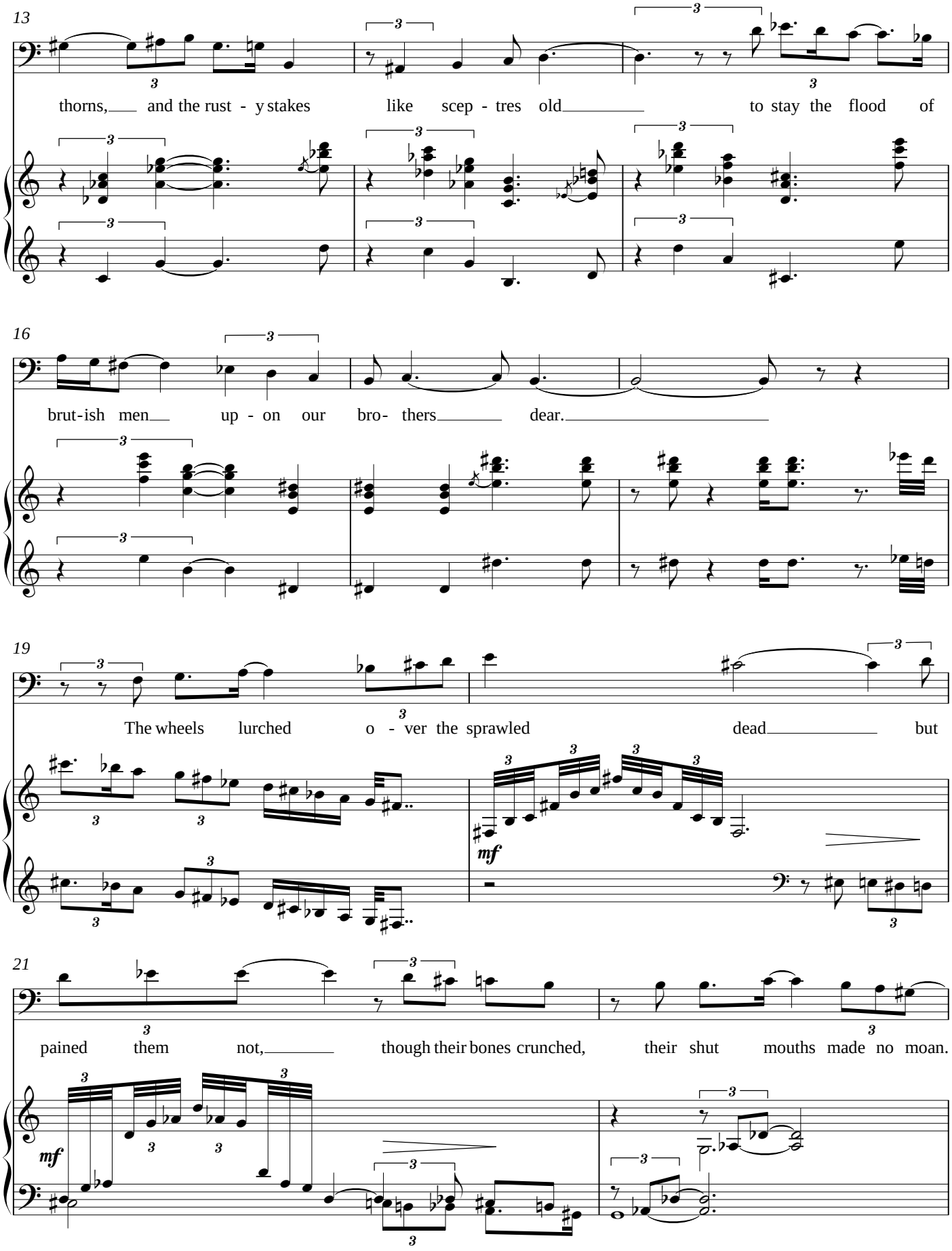
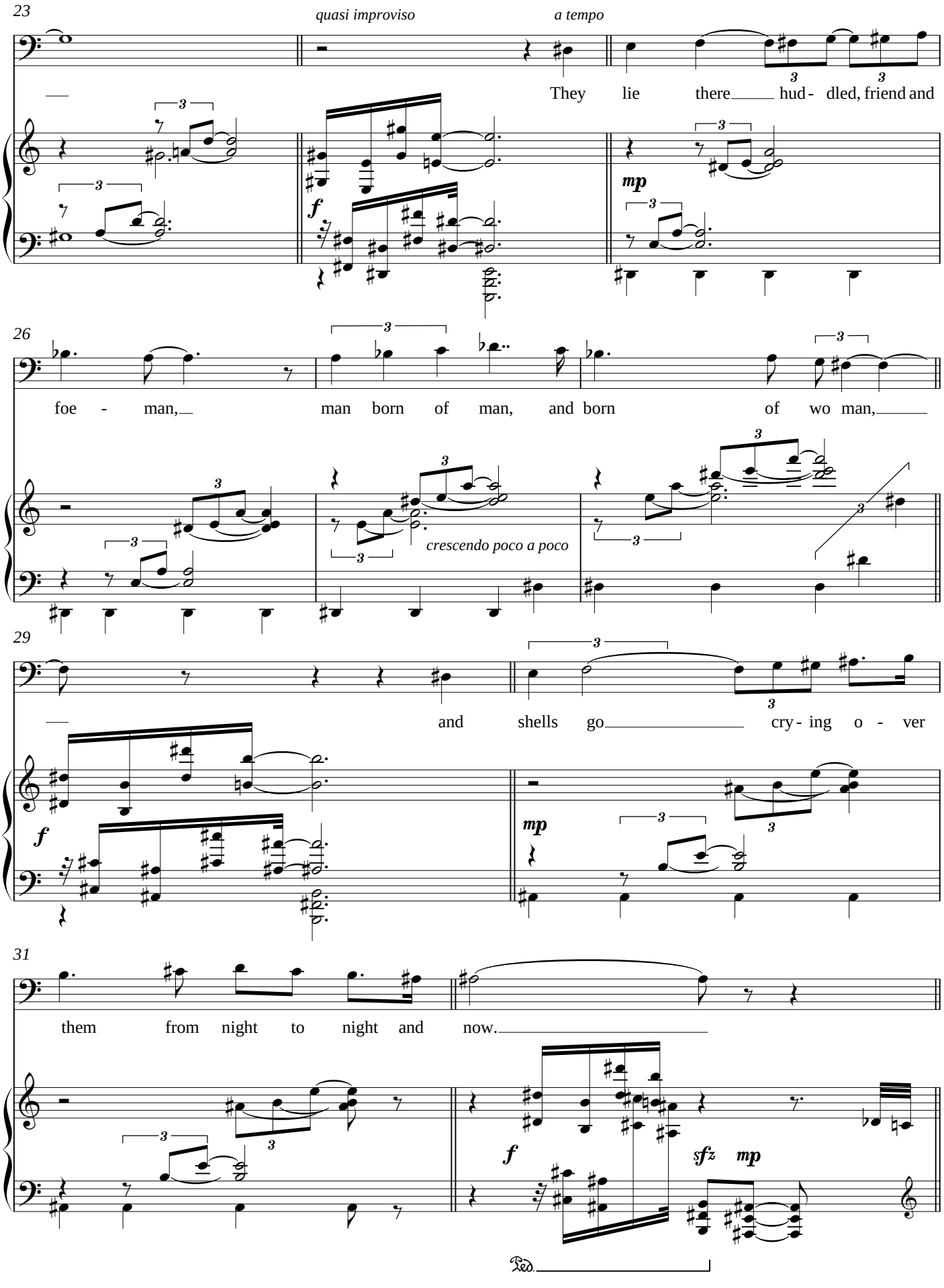
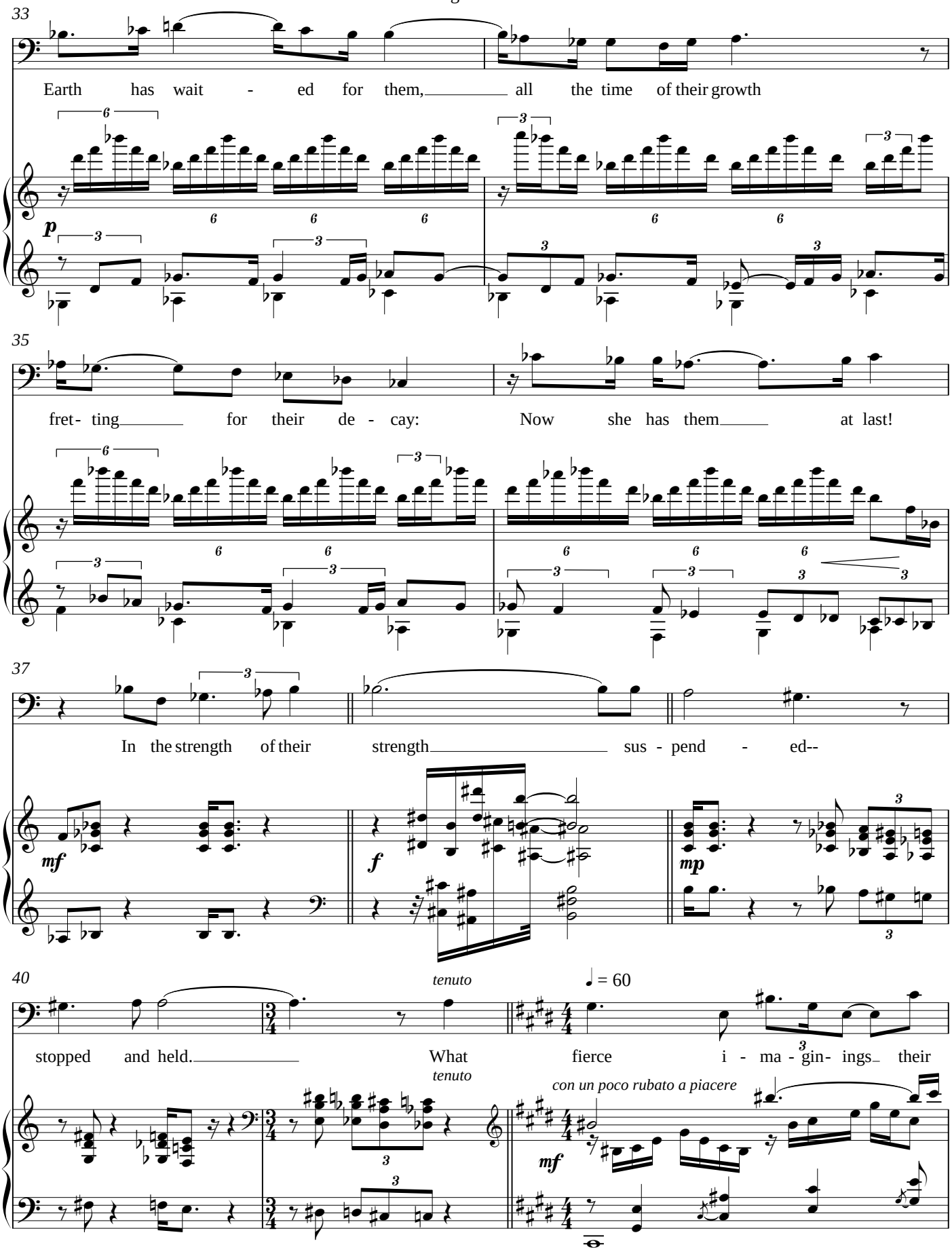
Dead Man's Dump

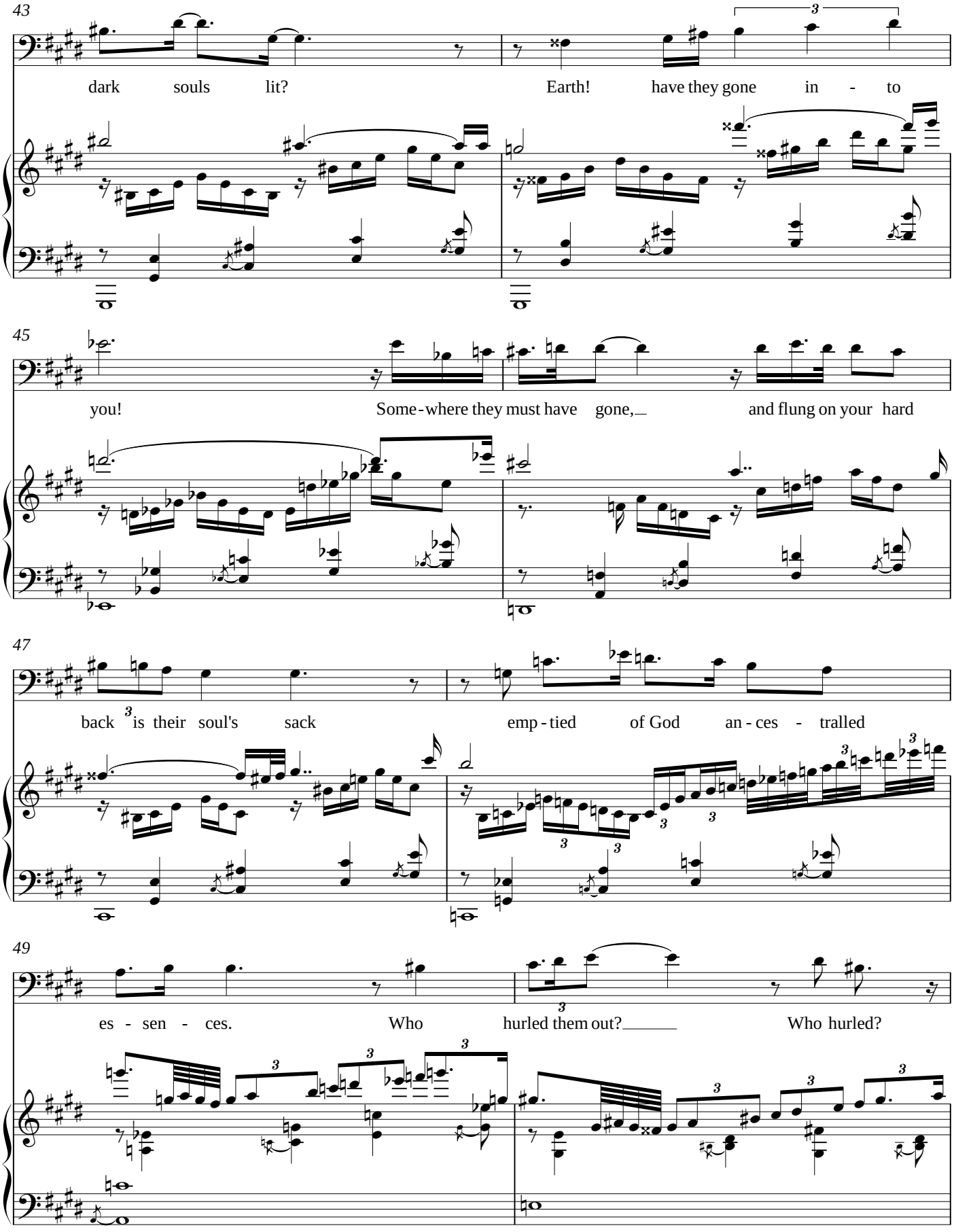
Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918)

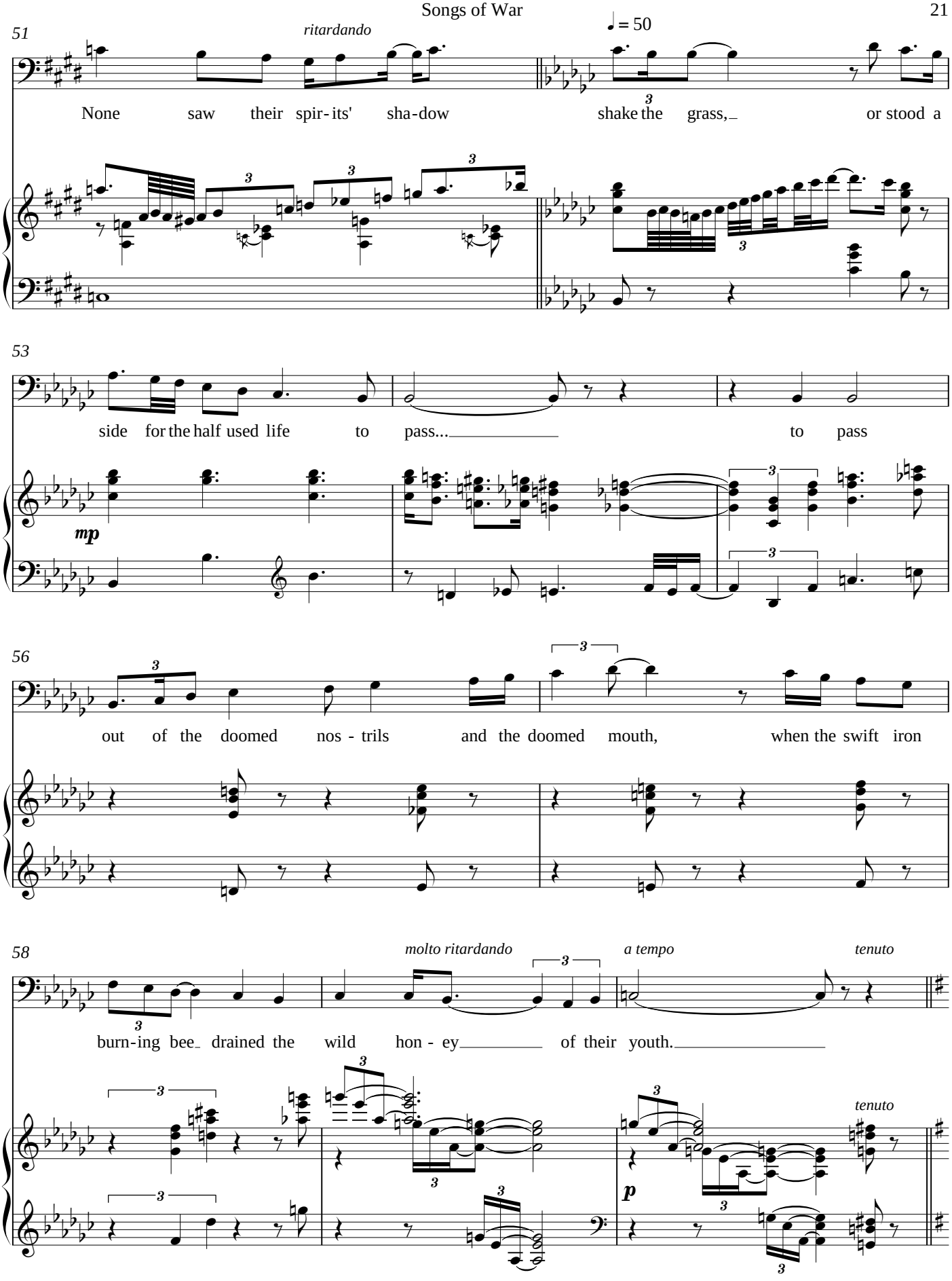


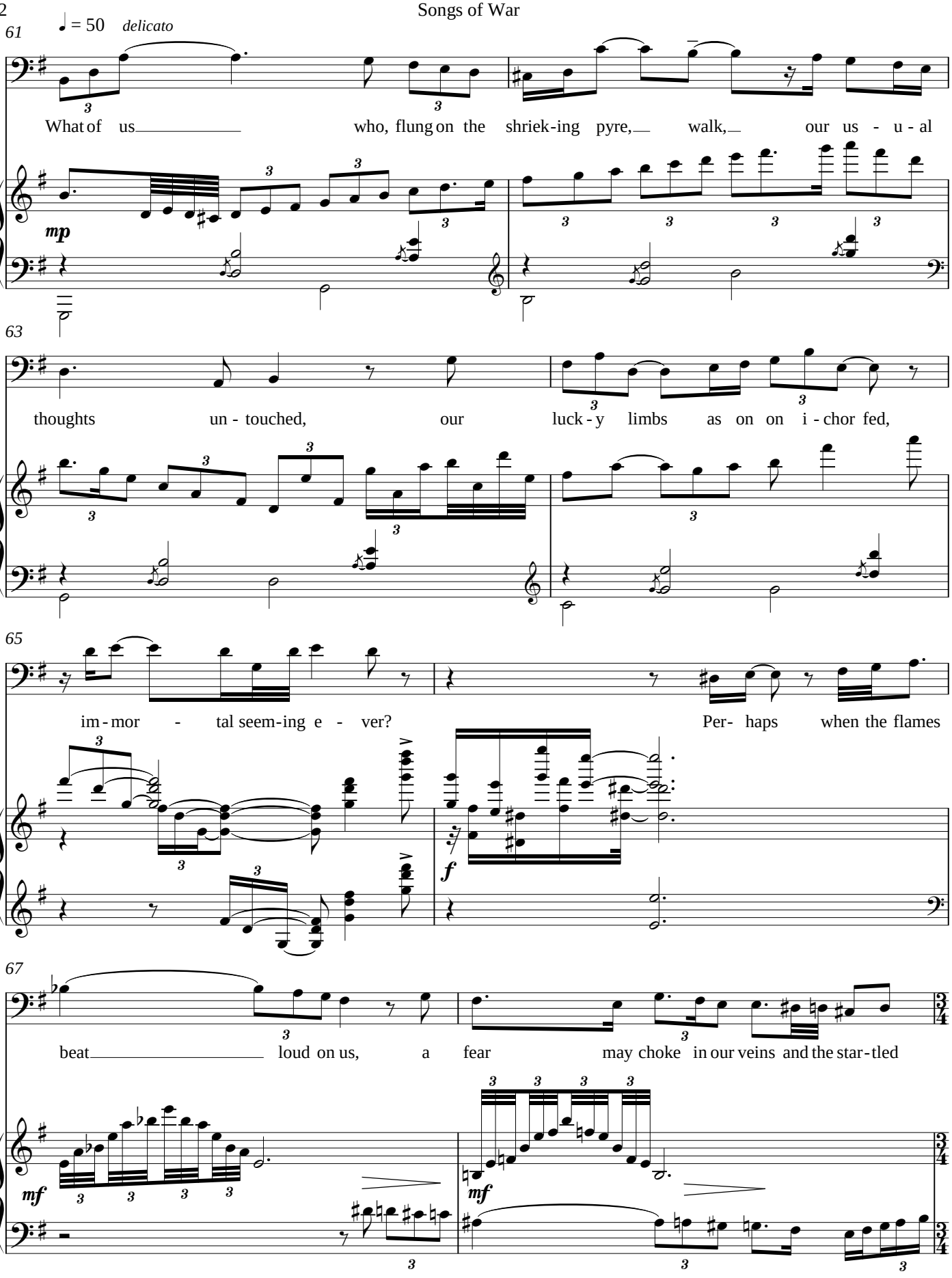

13
thorns, and the rust - y stakes like scep - tres old to stay the flood of
16
brut-ish men up - on our bro- thers dear.
19
The wheels lurched o - ver the sprawled dead but
mf
21
pained them not, though their bones crunched, their shut mouths made no moan.
mf

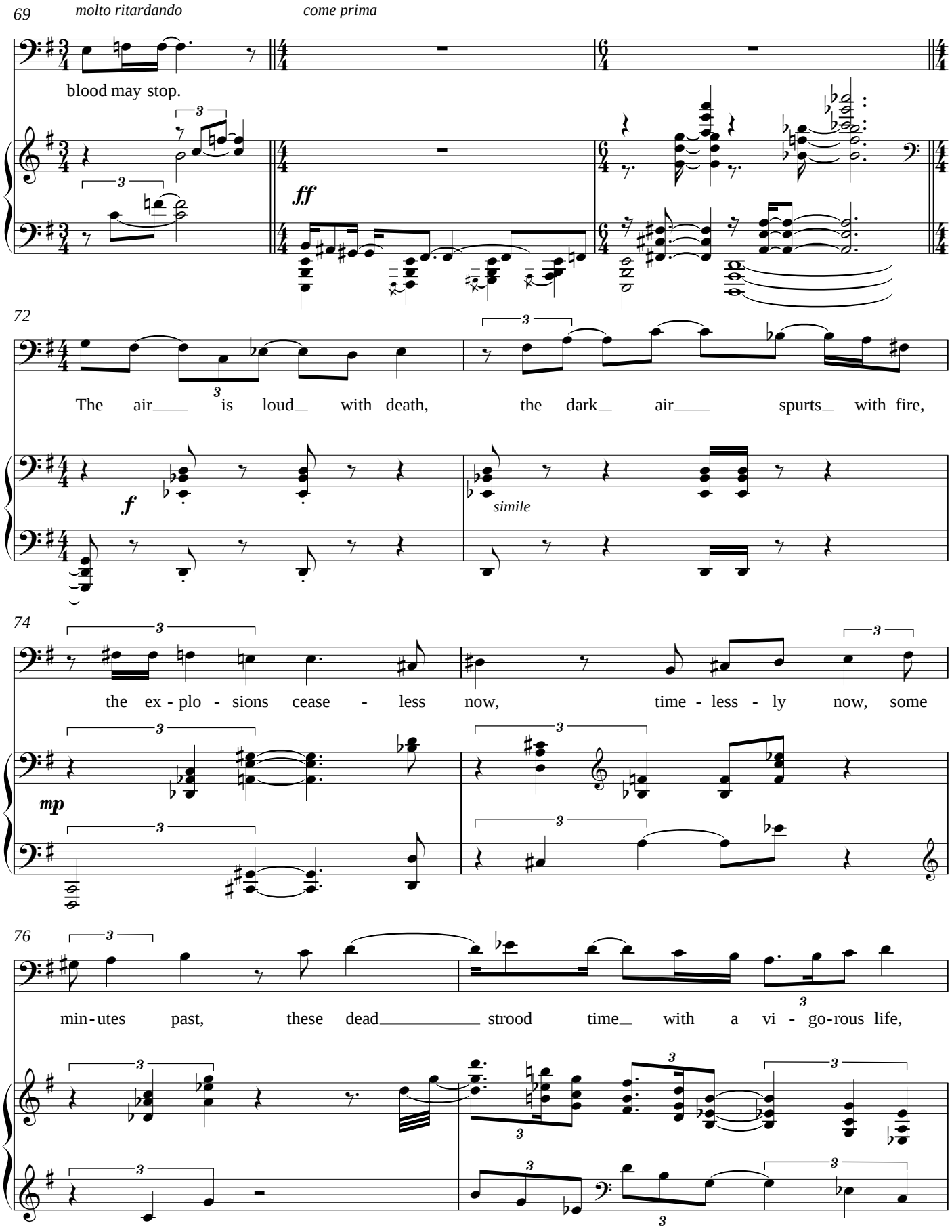

23
quasi improviso
a tempo
They lie there hud - dled, friend and
mp
26
foe - man, man born of man, and born of wo man,
crescendo poco a poco
29
and shells go cry - ing o - ver
mp
31
them from night to night and now.
sfz mp

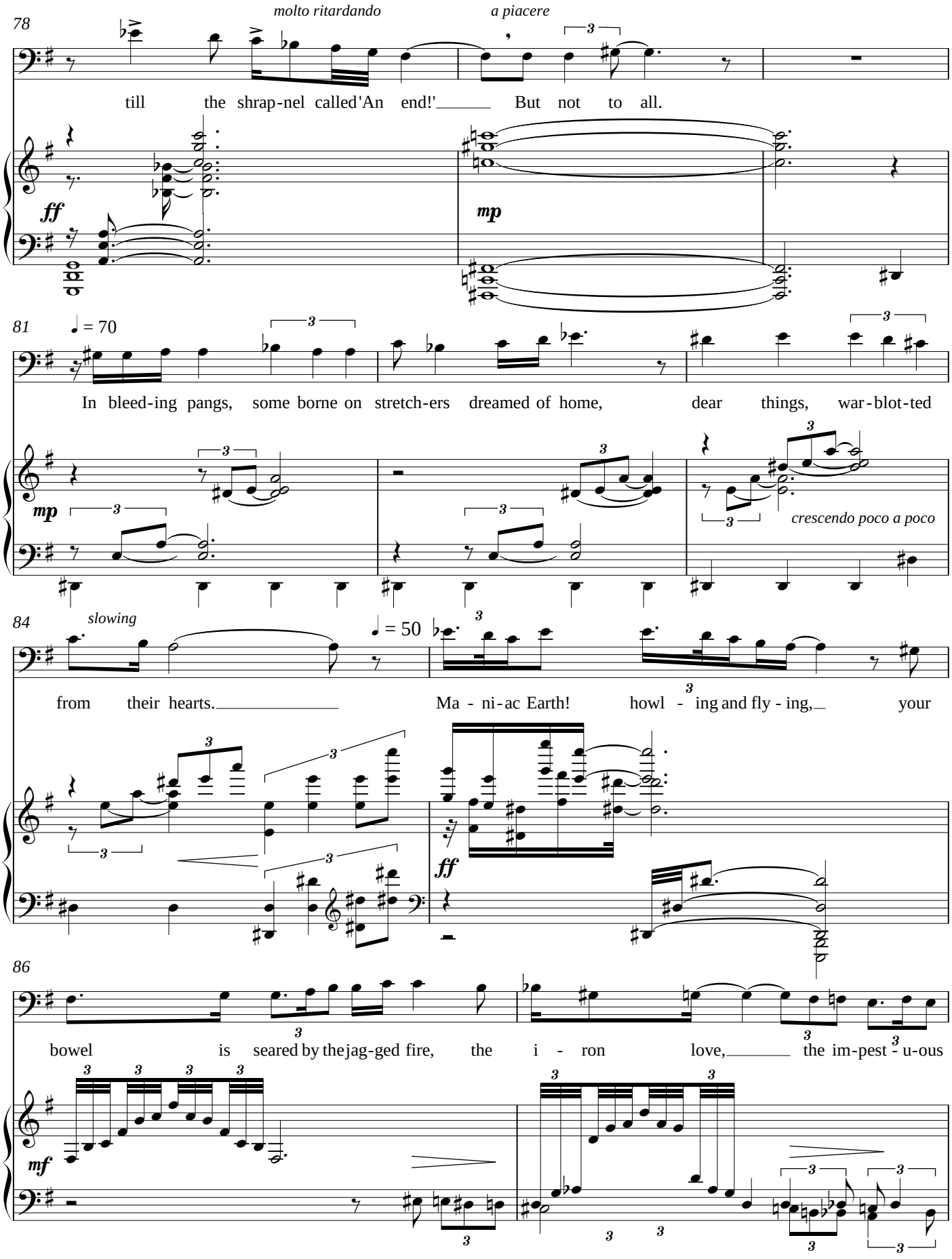

33
Earth has wait - ed for them, all the time of their growth
p
35
fret- ting for their de - cay: Now she has them at last!
37
In the strength of their strength sus - pend - ed--
mf
f
mp
40
tenuto
stopped and held. What fierce i - ma - gin- ings their
tenuto
♩ = 60
con un poco rubato a piacere
mf

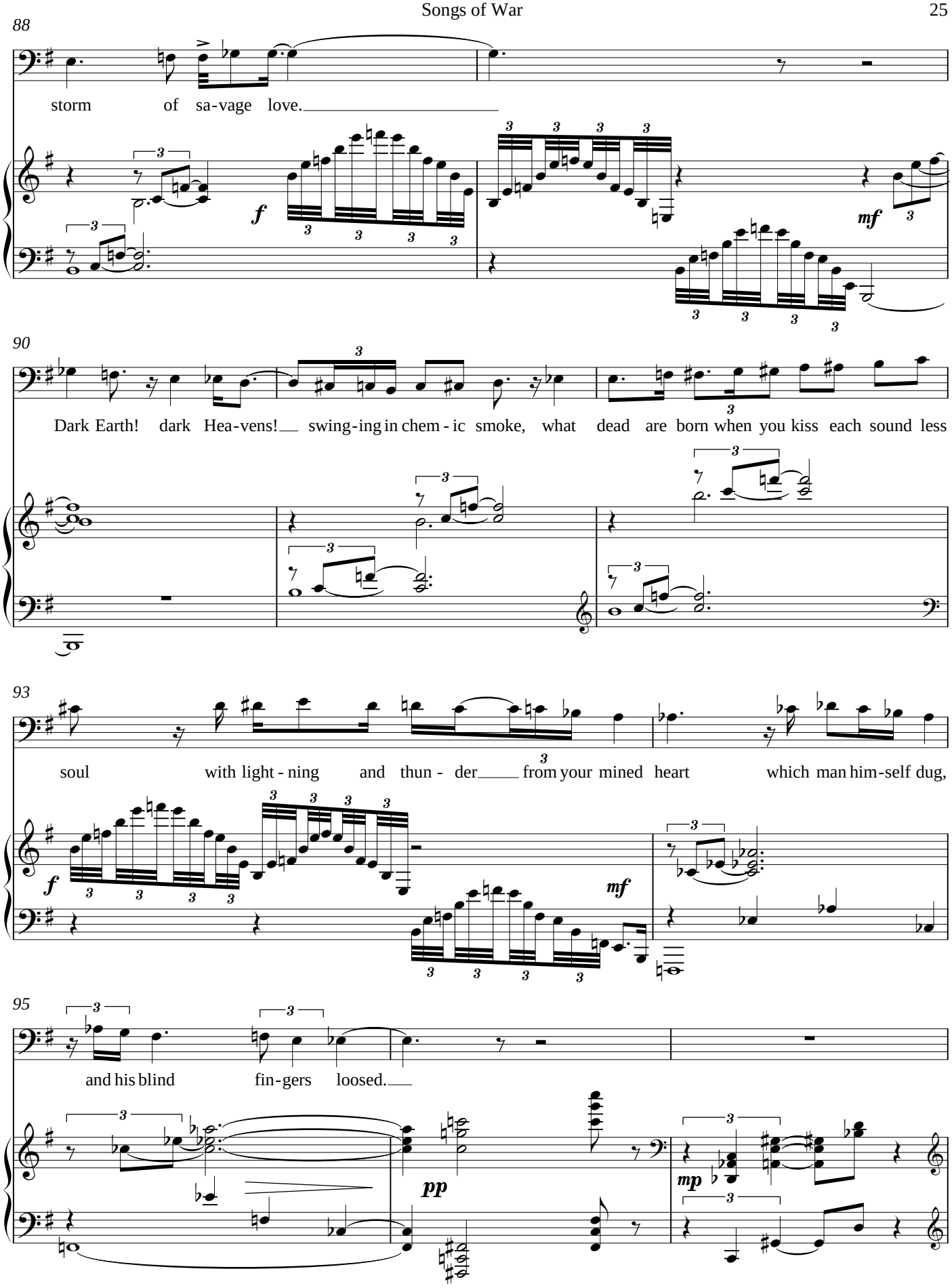

43
dark souls lit?
Earth! have they gone in - to
45
you!
Some-where they must have gone,
and flung on your hard
47
back is their soul's sack
emp-tied of God an-ces-tralled
49
es - sen - ces.
Who hurled them out?
Who hurled?

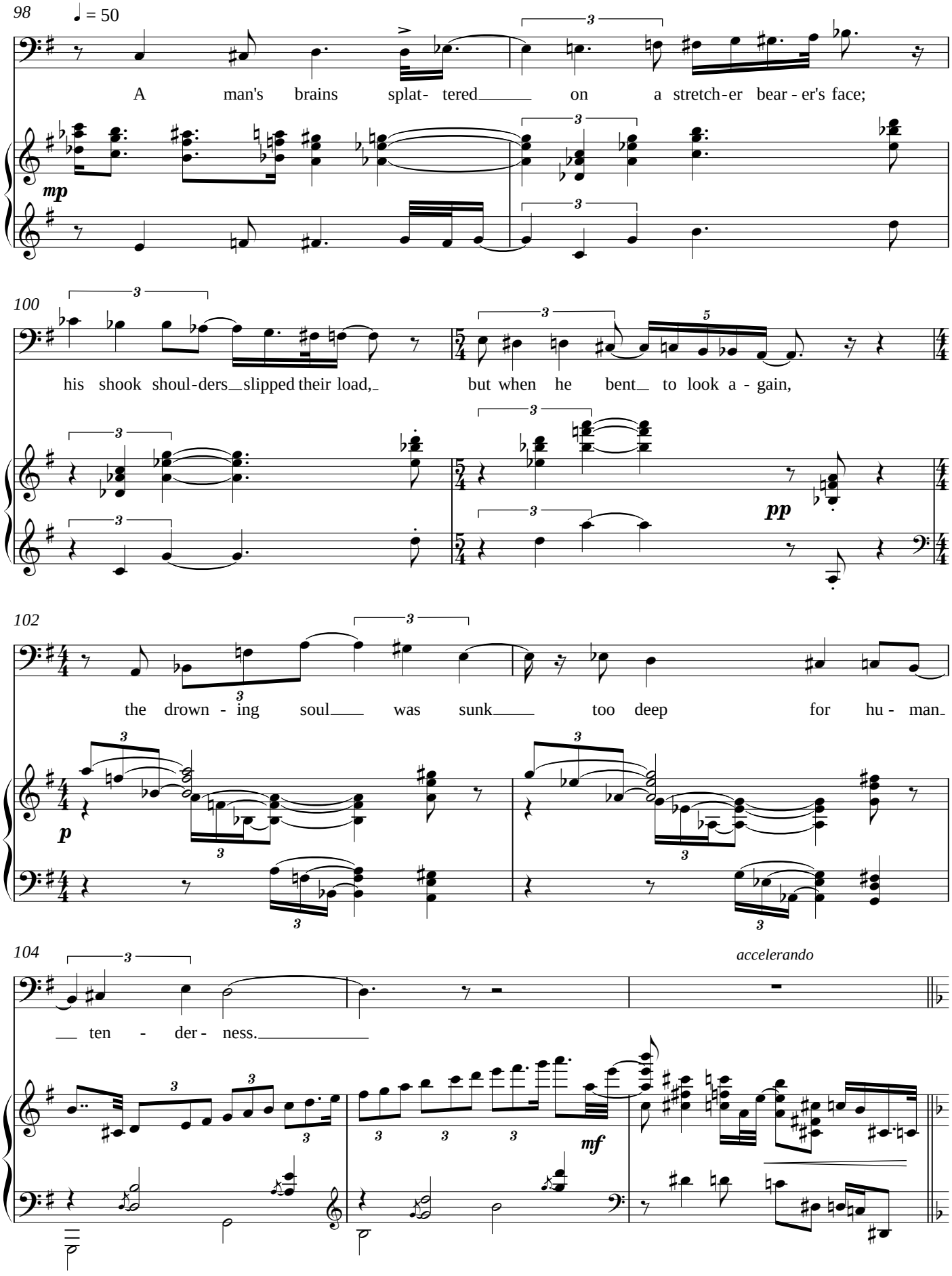

51
ritardando
♩ = 50
None saw their spir - its' sha - dow shake the grass, or stood a
53
side for the half used life to pass... to pass
mp
56
out of the doomed nos - trils and the doomed mouth, when the swift iron
58
molto ritardando
a tempo
tenuto
burn - ing bee drained the wild hon - ey of their youth.
tenuto
p

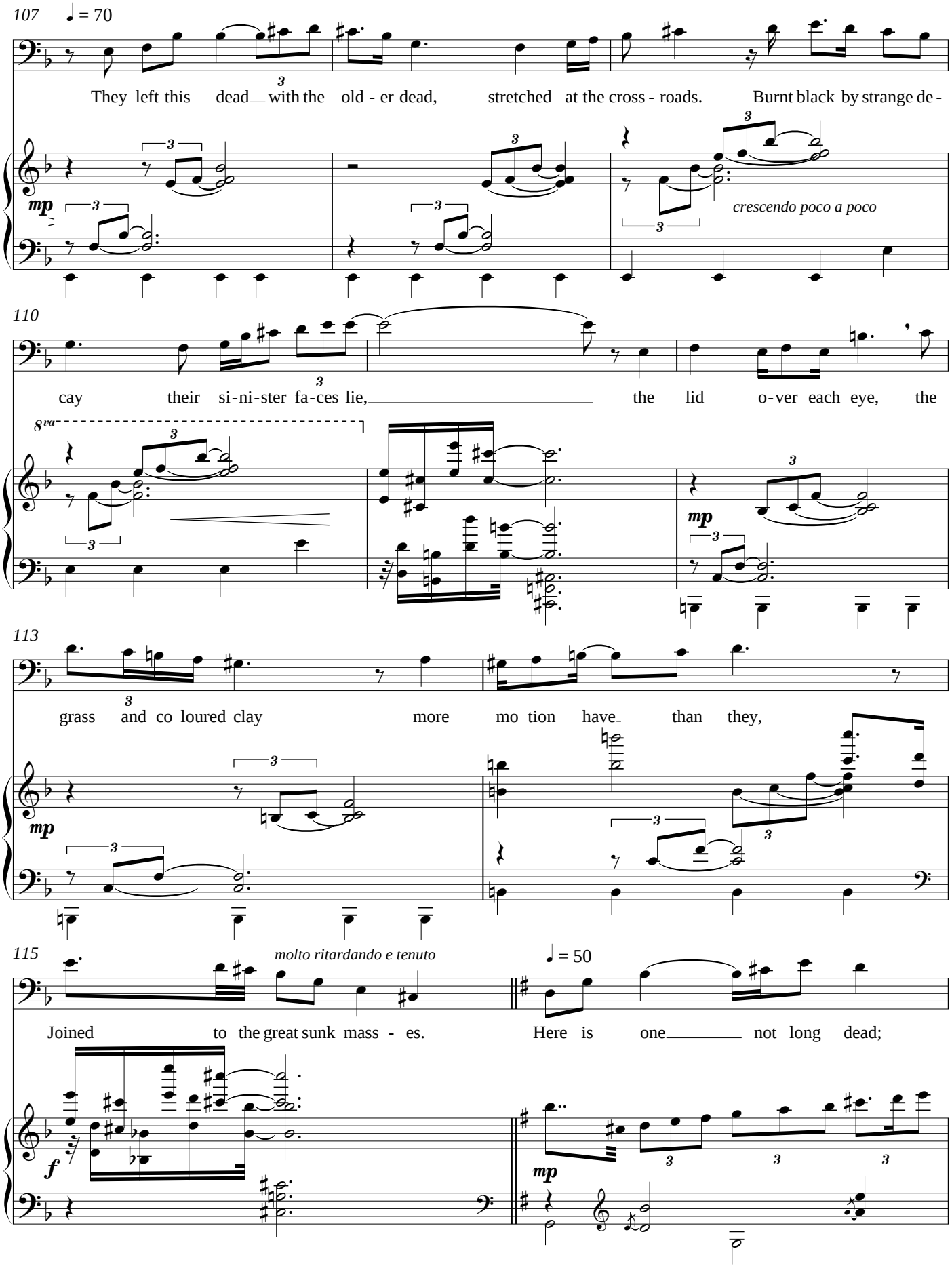

61
♩ = 50 delicato
What of us who, flung on the shriek-ing pyre, walk, our us - u - al
mp
63
thoughts un - touched, our luck - y limbs as on on i - chor fed,
65
im - mor - tal seem-ing e - ver? Per- haps when the flames
f
67
beat loud on us, a fear may choke in our veins and the star - tled
mf
mf

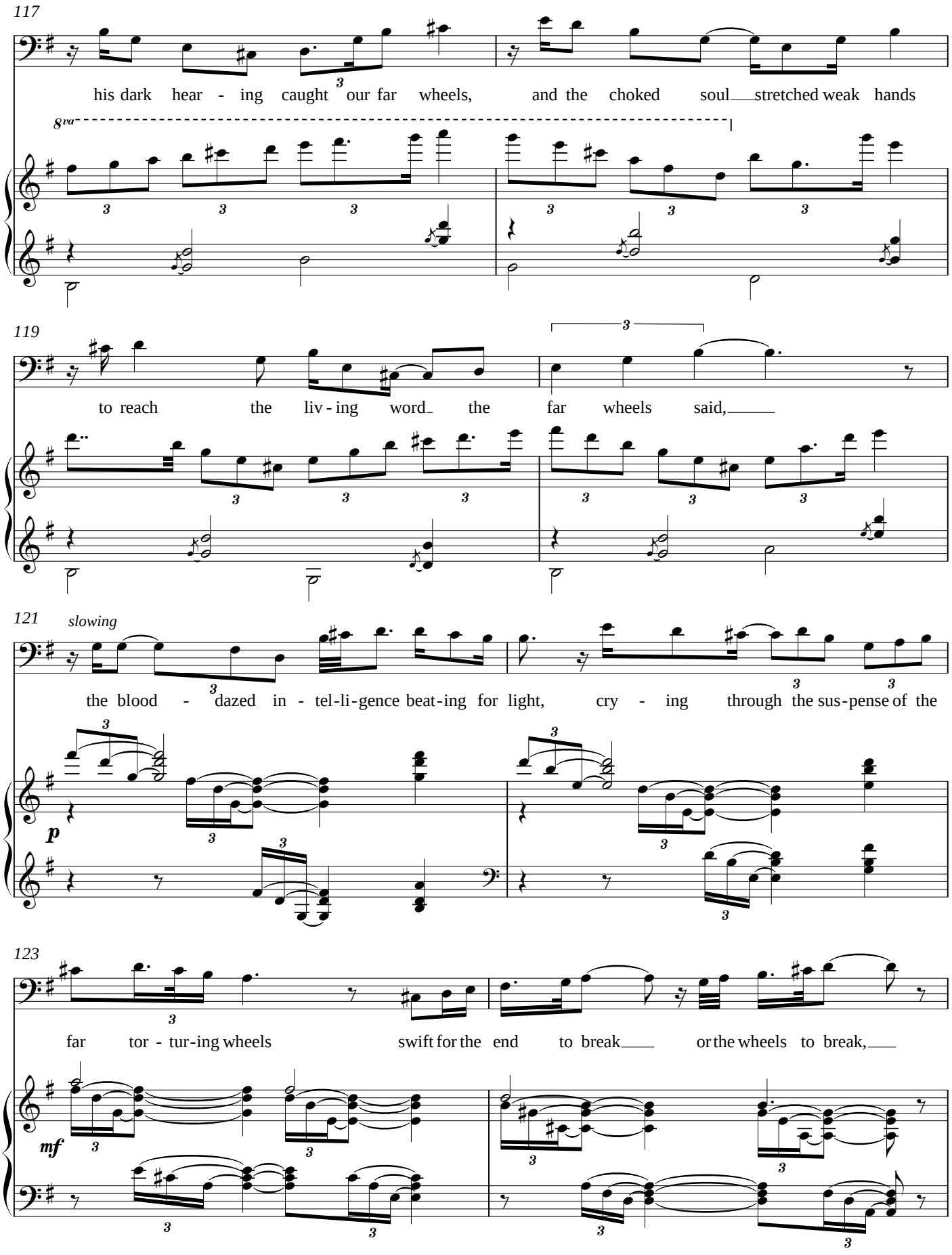

69
molto ritardando
come prima
blood may stop.
ff
72
The air is loud with death, the dark air spurts with fire,
f
simile
74
the ex - plo - sions cease - less now, time - less - ly now, some
mp
76
min - utes past, these dead strood time with a vi - go - rous life,

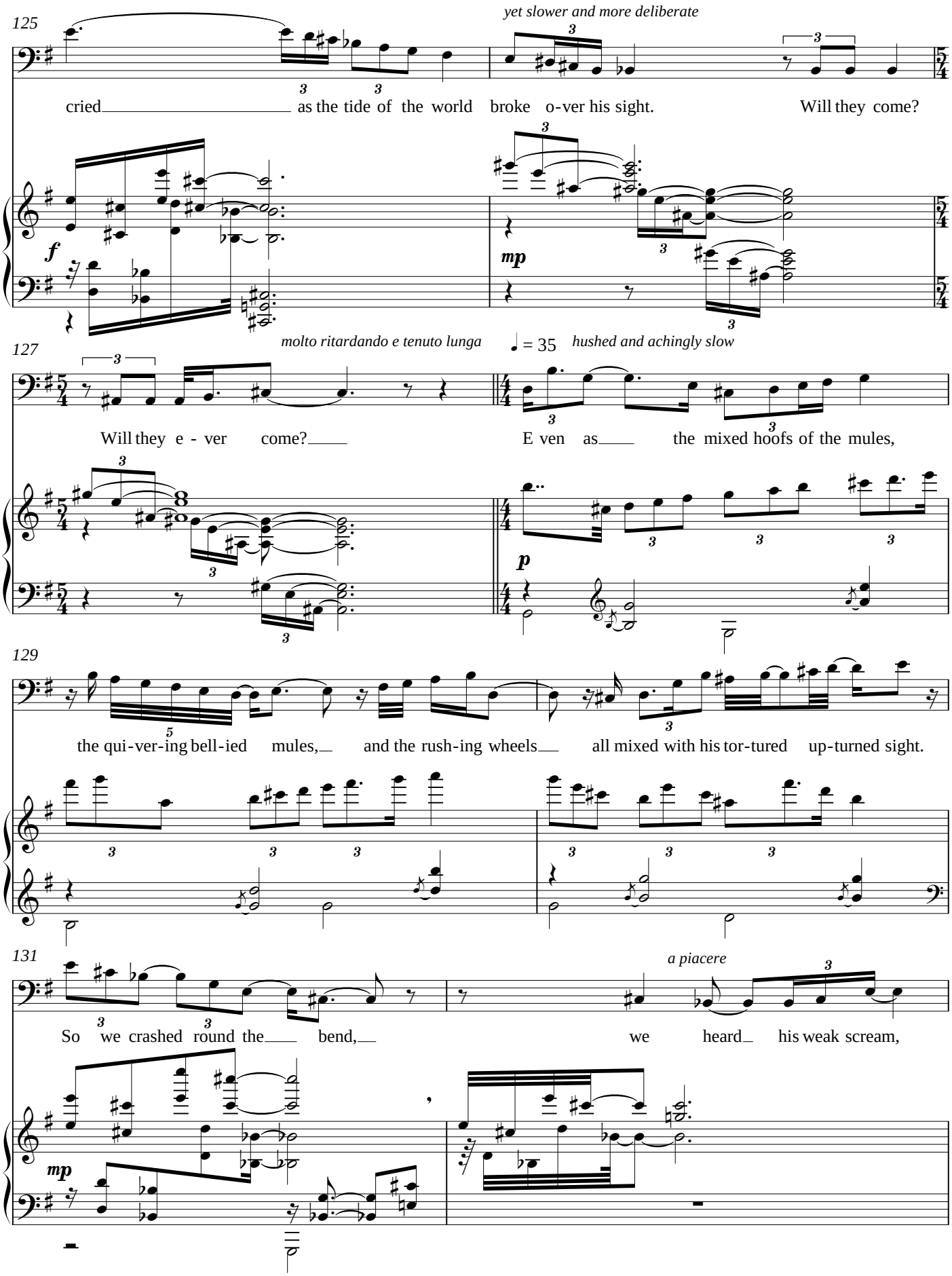

78
molto ritardando
a piacere
till the shrap-nel called'An end!' But not to all.
ff
mp
81
♩ = 70
In bleed-ing pangs, some borne on stretch-ers dreamed of home, dear things, war-blot-ted
mp
crescendo poco a poco
84
slowing
♩ = 50
from their hearts. Ma - ni-ac Earth! howl - ing and fly - ing, your
ff
86
bowel is seared by the jag-ged fire, the i - ron love, the im-pest - u-ous
mf


88
storm of sa-vage love.
f
mf
90
Dark Earth! dark Hea-vens! swing-ing in chem-ic smoke, what dead are born when you kiss each sound less
93
soul with light-ning and thun-der from your mined heart which man him-self dug,
f
mf
95
and his blind fin-gers loosed.
pp
mp


98
♩ = 50
A man's brains splat- tered on a stretch-er bear - er's face;
mp
100
his shook shoul-ders slipped their load, but when he bent to look a - gain,
pp
102
the drown - ing soul was sunk too deep for hu - man
p
104
accelerando
ten - der - ness.
mf


107
♩ = 70
They left this dead with the old - er dead, stretched at the cross - roads. Burnt black by strange de -
mp
crescendo poco a poco
110
cay their si-ni-ster fa-ces lie, the lid o-ver each eye, the
8va
mp
113
grass and co loured clay more mo tion have than they,
mp
115
molto ritardando e tenuto
♩ = 50
Joined to the great sunk mass - es. Here is one not long dead;
f
mp


117
his dark hear - ing caught our far wheels, and the choked soul stretched weak hands
8va
119
to reach the liv - ing word the far wheels said,
121
slowing
the blood - dazed in - tel-li-gence beat-ing for light, cry - ing through the sus-pense of the
p
123
far tor - tur-ing wheels swift for the end to break or the wheels to break,
mf


125
yet slower and more deliberate
cried as the tide of the world broke o-ver his sight. Will they come?
f
mp
127
molto ritardando e tenuto lunga
♩ = 35
hushed and achingly slow
Will they e - ver come? E ven as the mixed hoofs of the mules,
p
129
the qui-ver-ing bell-ied mules, and the rush-ing wheels all mixed with his tor-tured up-turned sight.
131
a piacere
So we crashed round the bend, we heard his weak scream,
mp

133

we heard his ve-ry last sound, and our wheels grazed his dead face.

135

♩ = 50

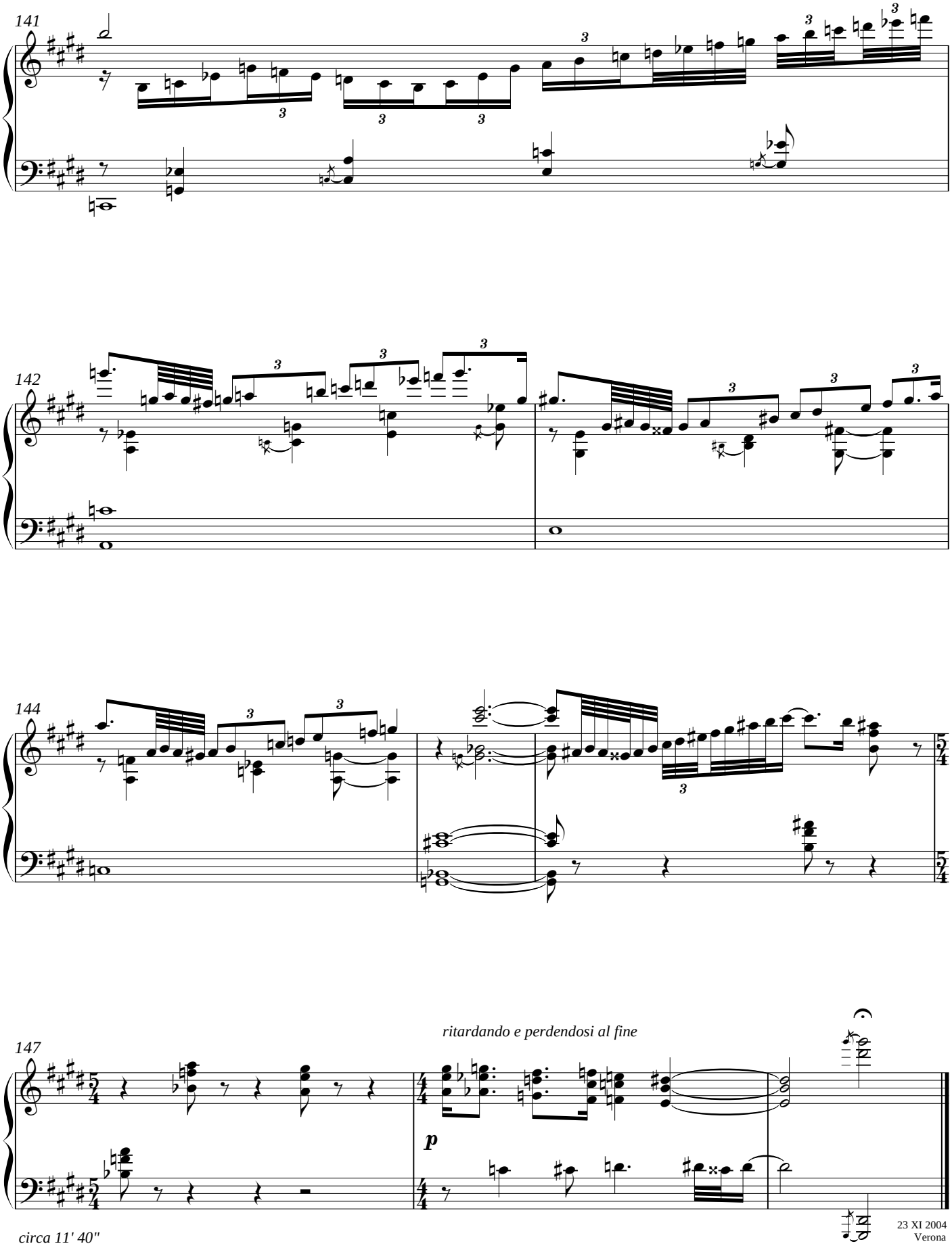
con un poco rubato a piacere

mp

molto sostenuto

137

139


141
142
144
147
ritardando e perdendosi al fine
p
circa 11' 40"
23 XI 2004
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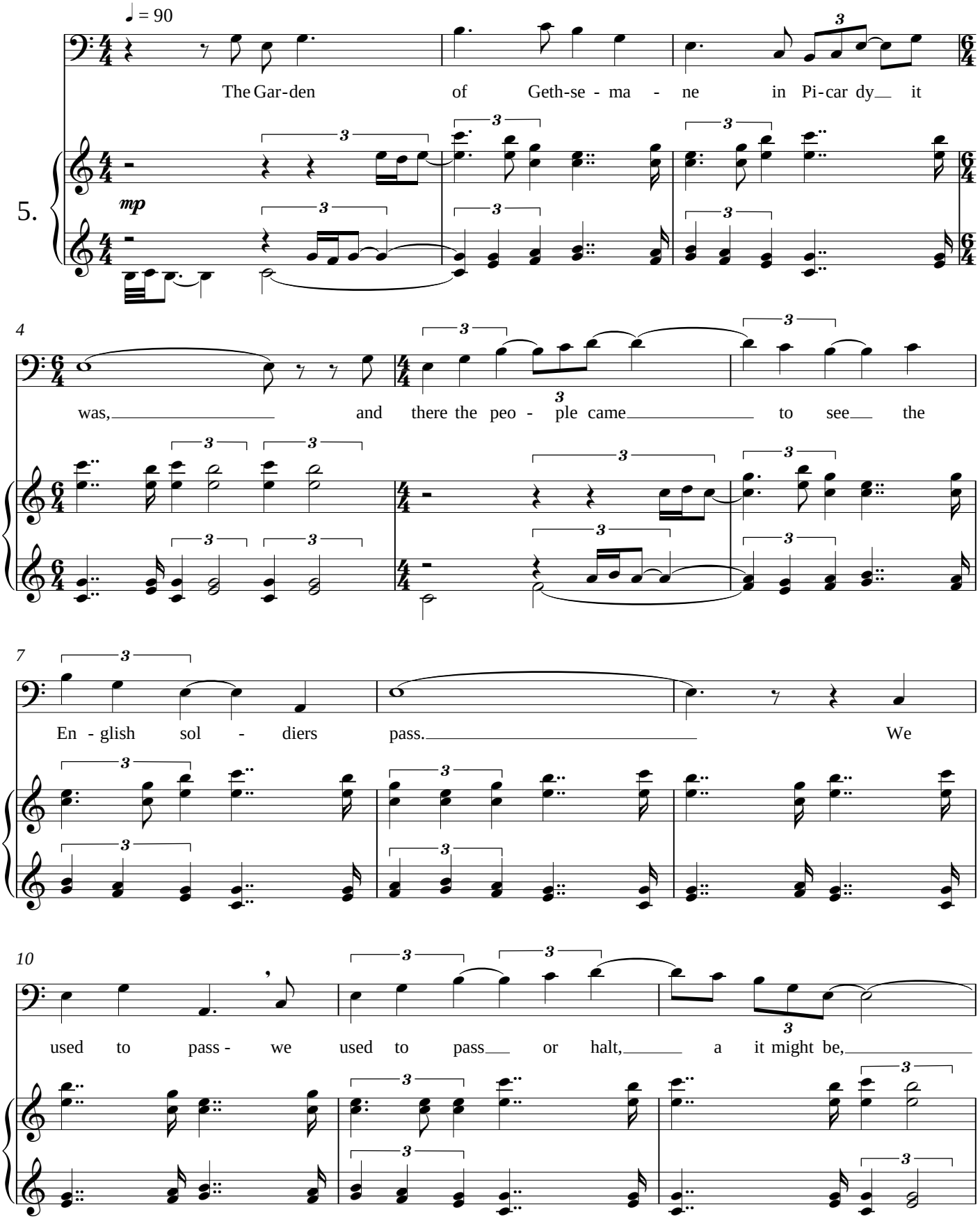
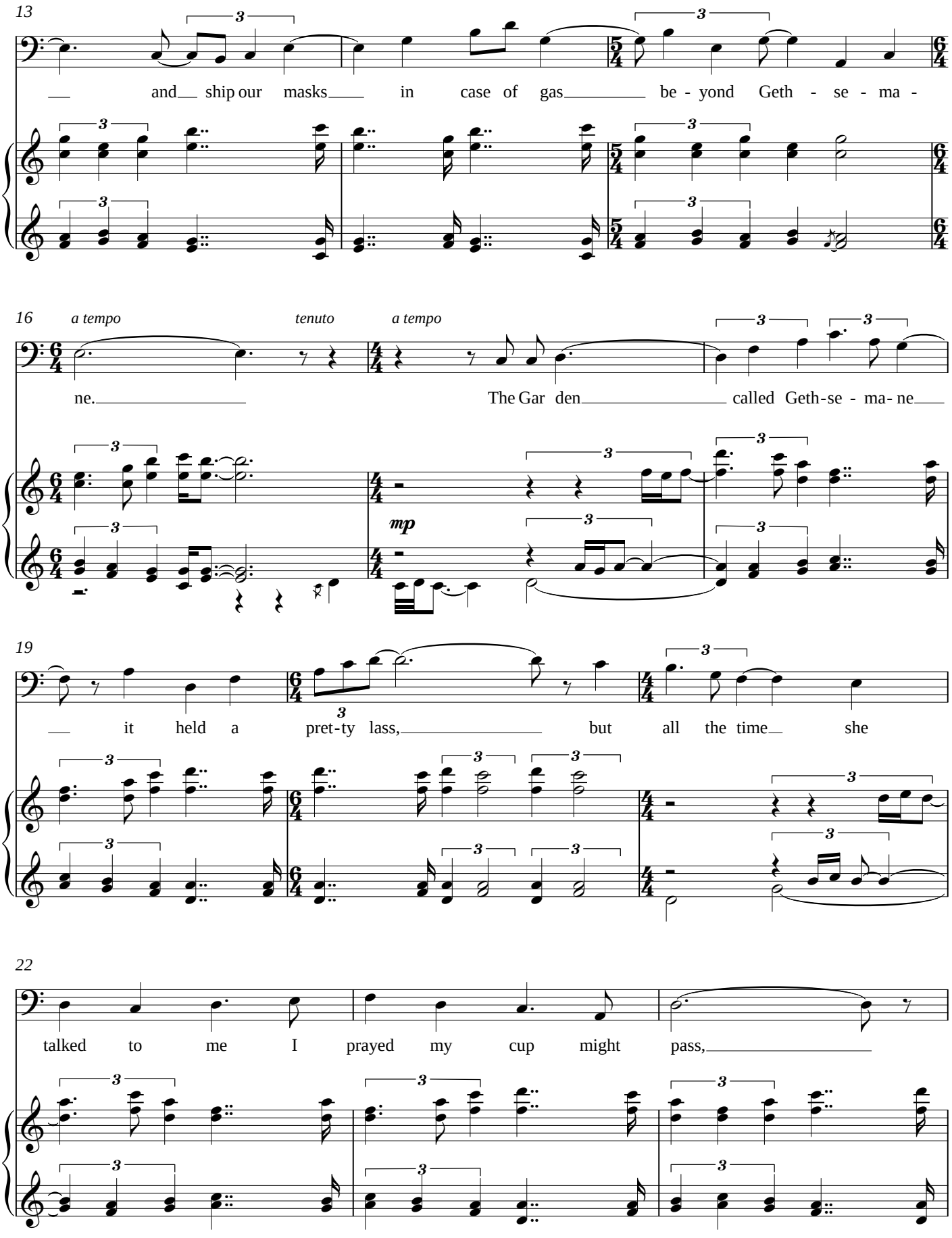
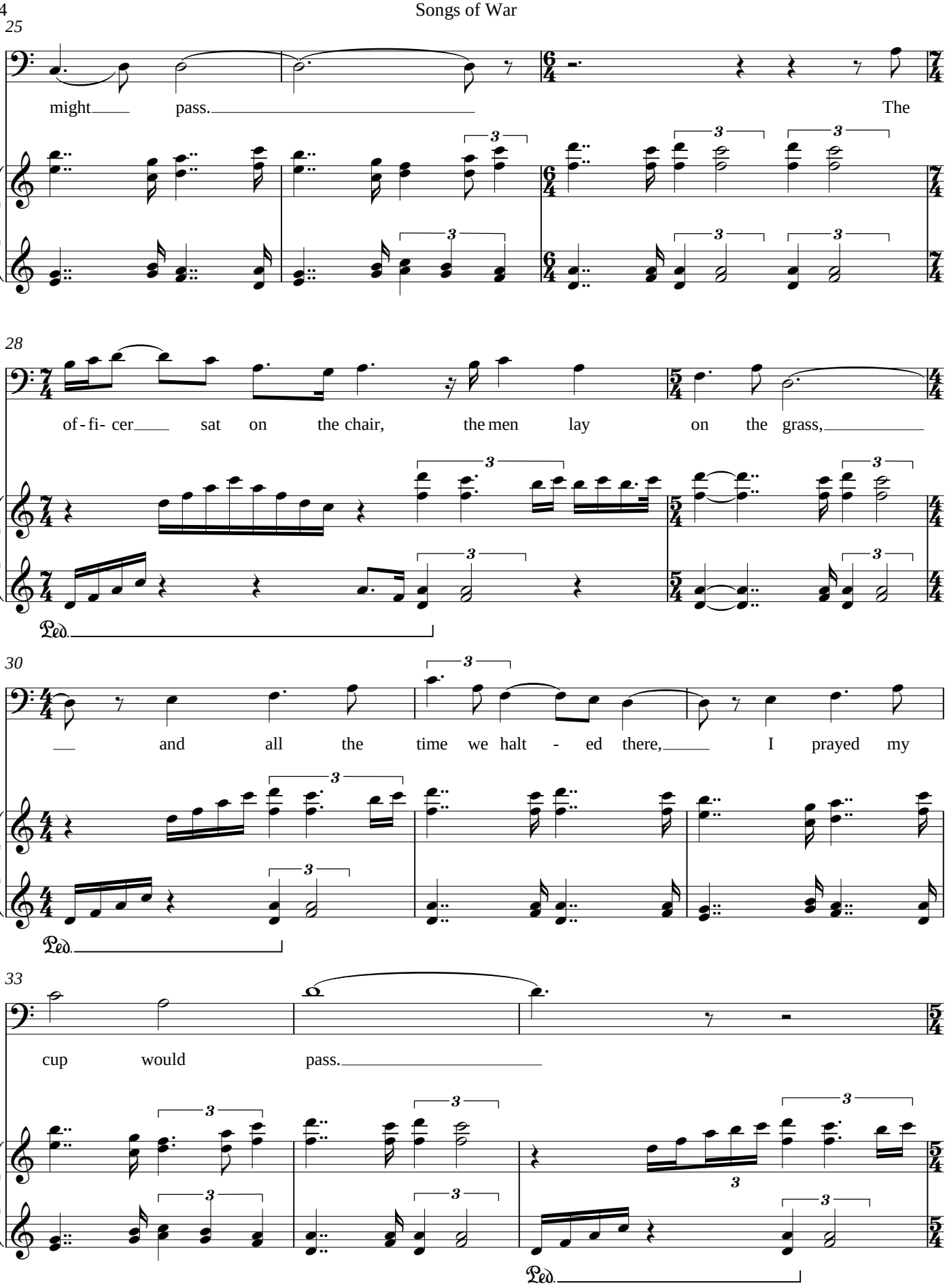
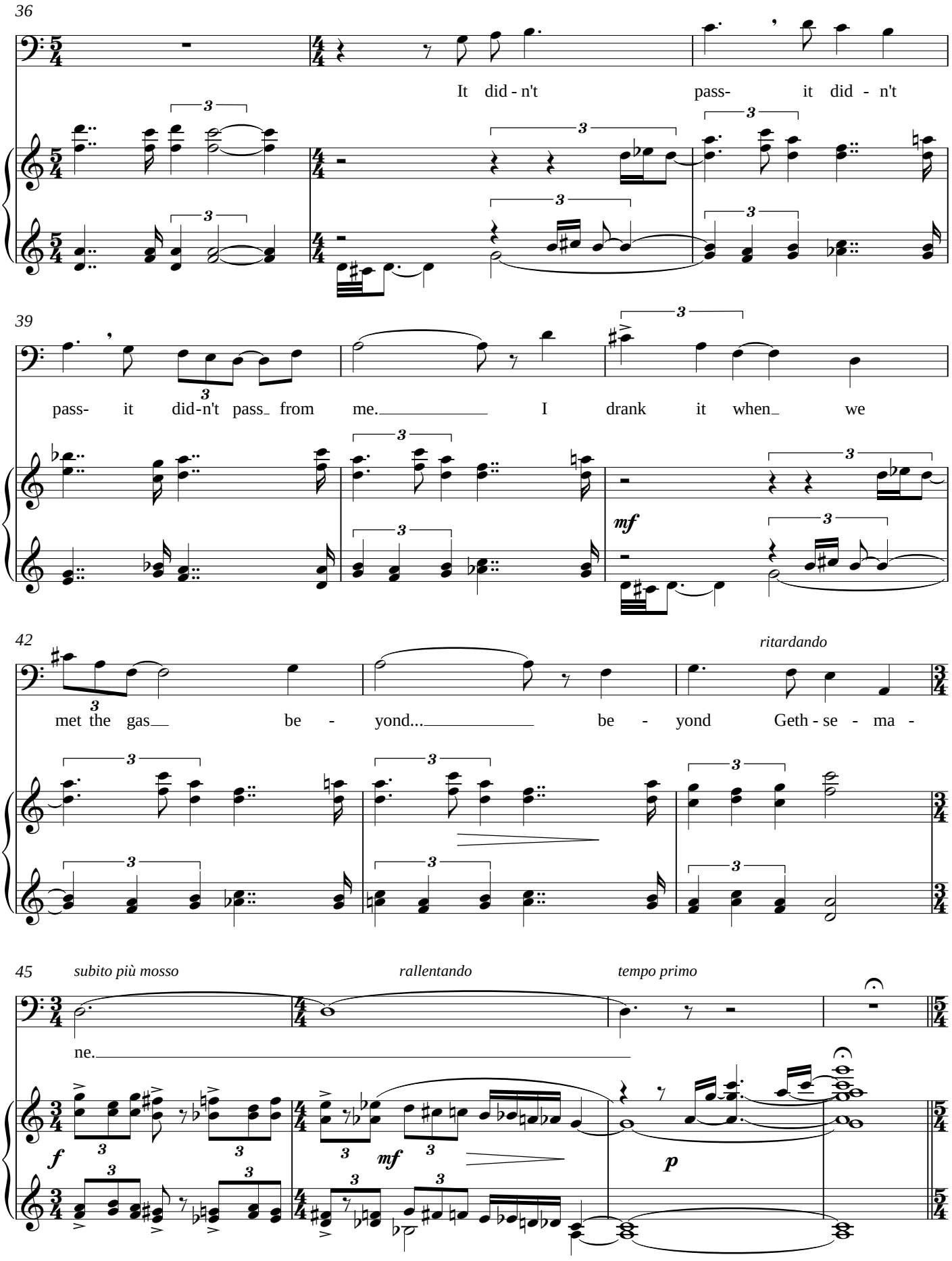
Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

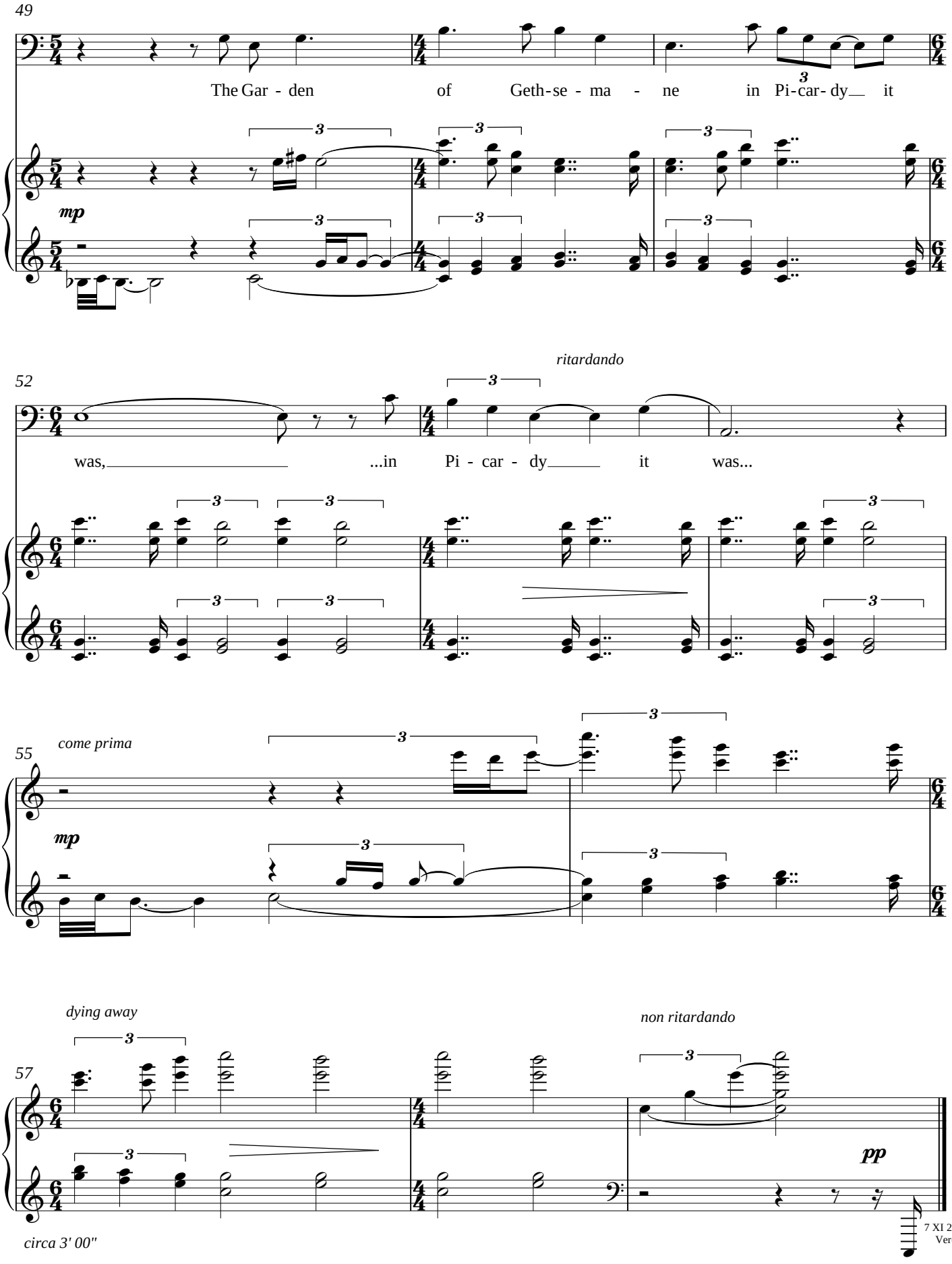
Gethsemane (1914-18)




13
ritardando
and ship our masks in case of gas be - yond Geth - se - ma -
16
a tempo
tenuto
a tempo
ne.
The Gar den called Geth-se - ma- ne
mp
19
it held a pret-ty lass, but all the time she
22
talked to me I prayed my cup might pass,

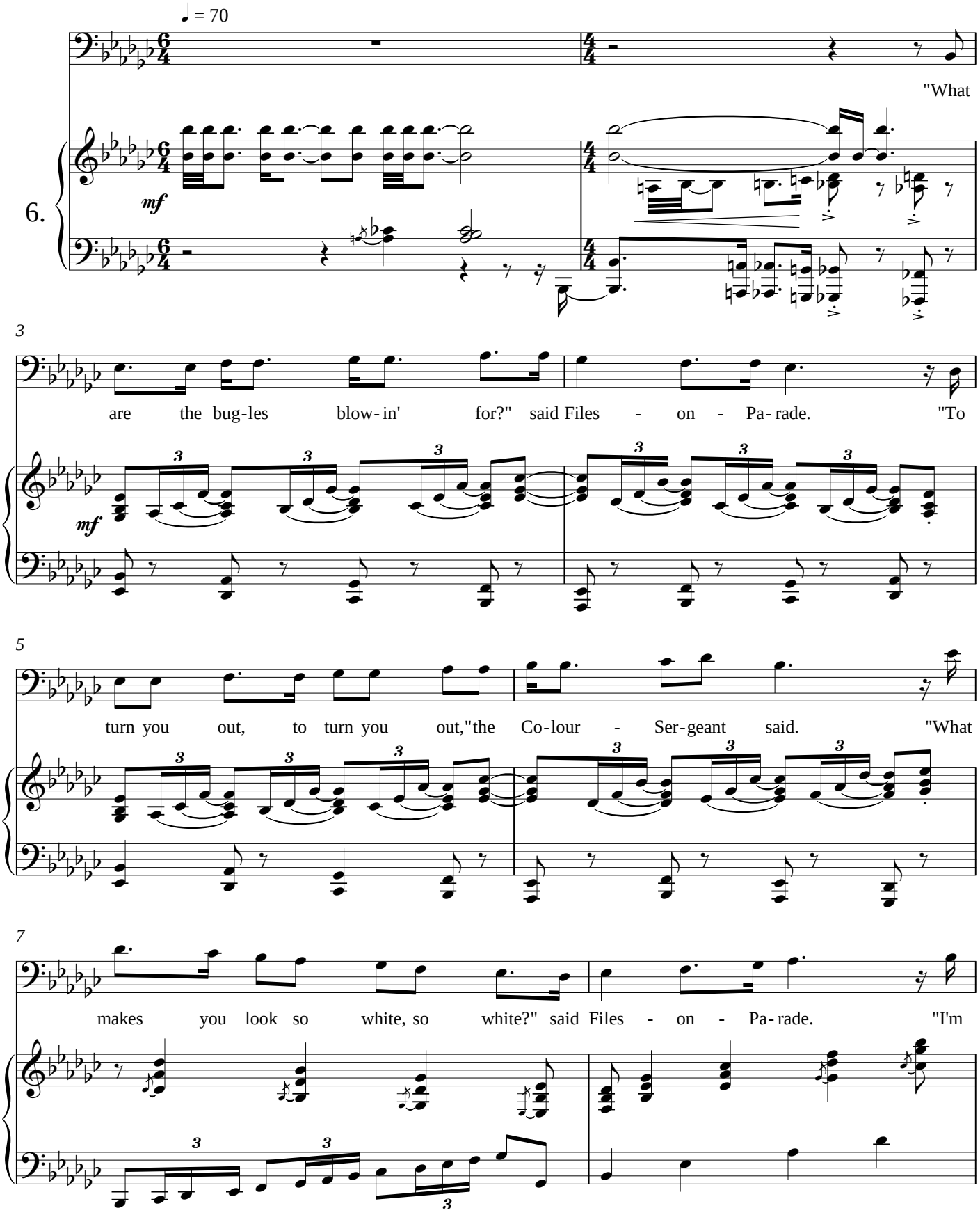

25
might pass. The
28
of-fi-cer sat on the chair, the men lay on the grass,
Ped.
30
and all the time we halt-ed there, I prayed my
Ped.
33
cup would pass.
Ped.

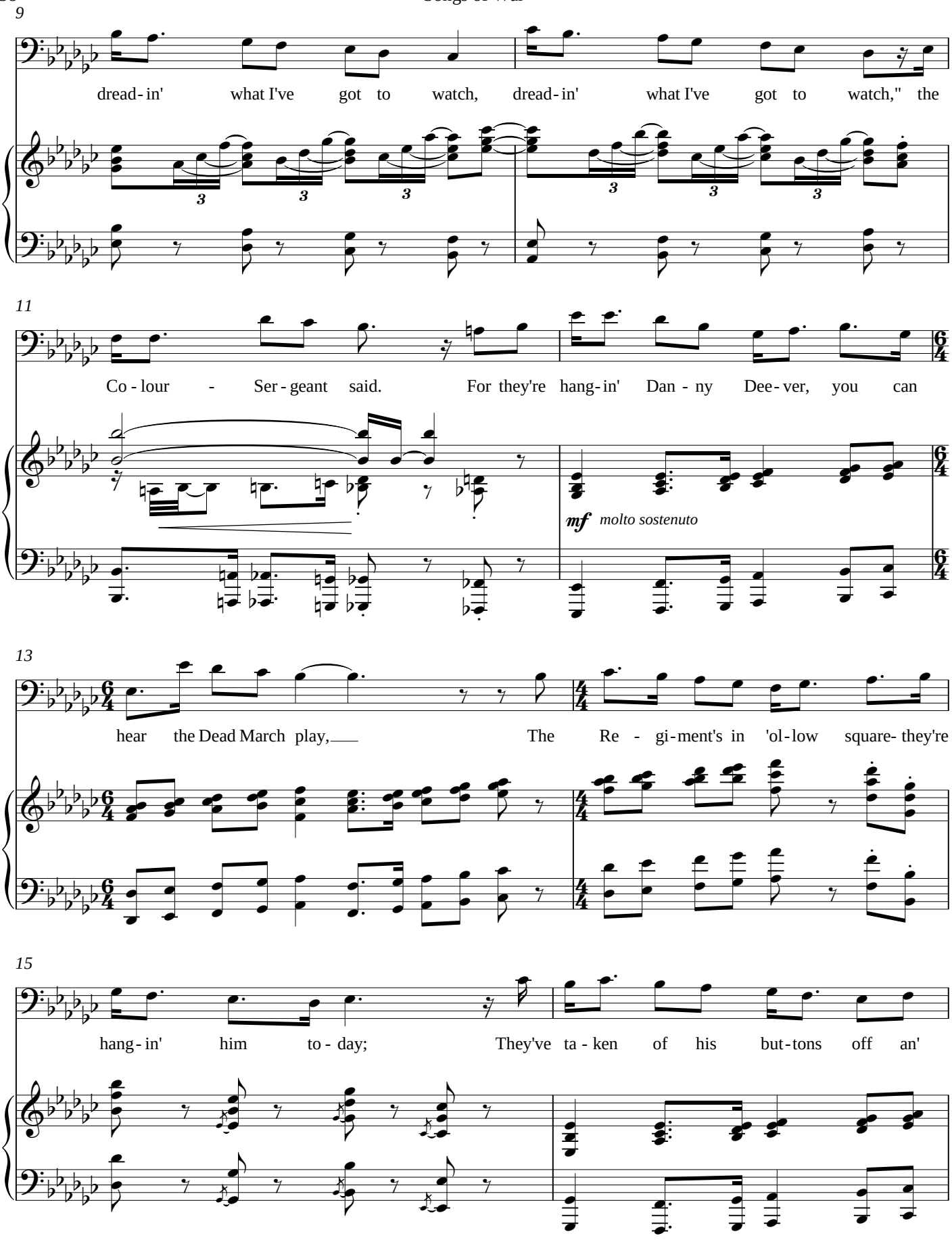

36
It did - n't pass- it did - n't
39
pass- it did-n't pass_ from me. I drank it when_ we
mf
42
ritardando
met the gas_ be - yond... be - yond Geth - se - ma -
45
subito più mosso
rallentando
tempo primo
ne.
f
mf
p

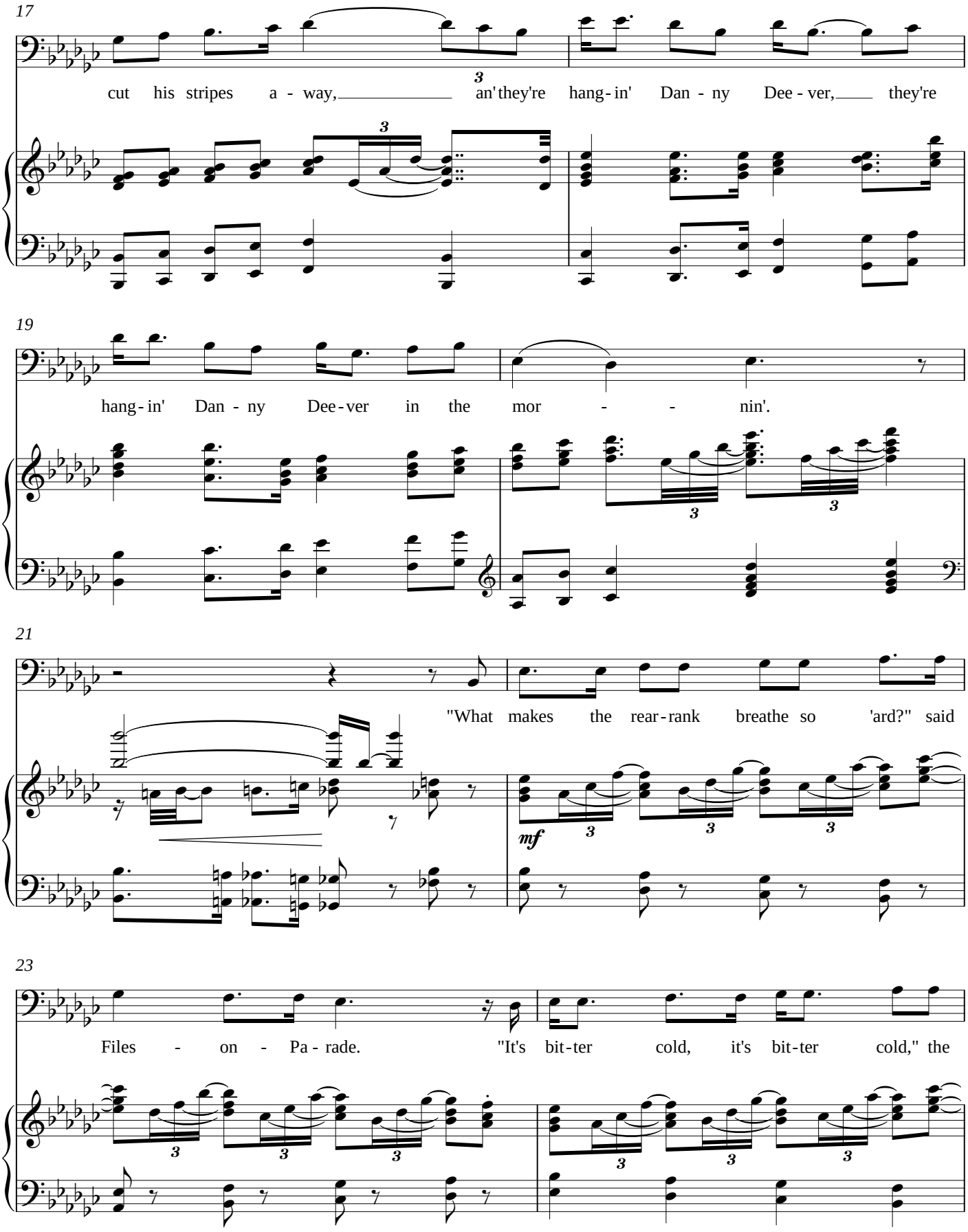

49
The Gar - den of Geth-se - ma - ne in Pi-car- dy it
mp
52
ritardando
was, ...in Pi - car - dy it was...
55
come prima
mp
dying away
57
non ritardando
pp
circa 3' 00"
7 XI 2004
Verona

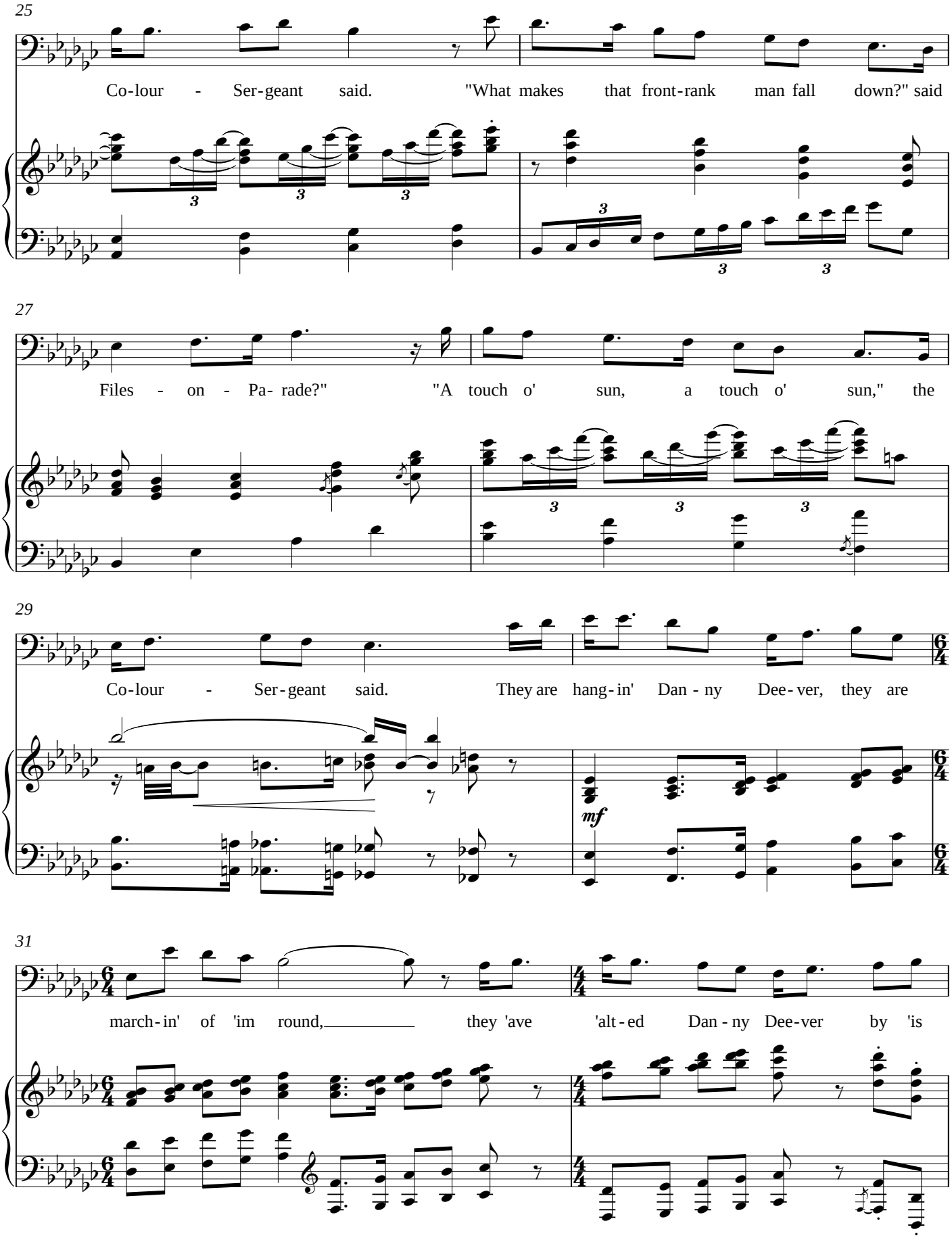
Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

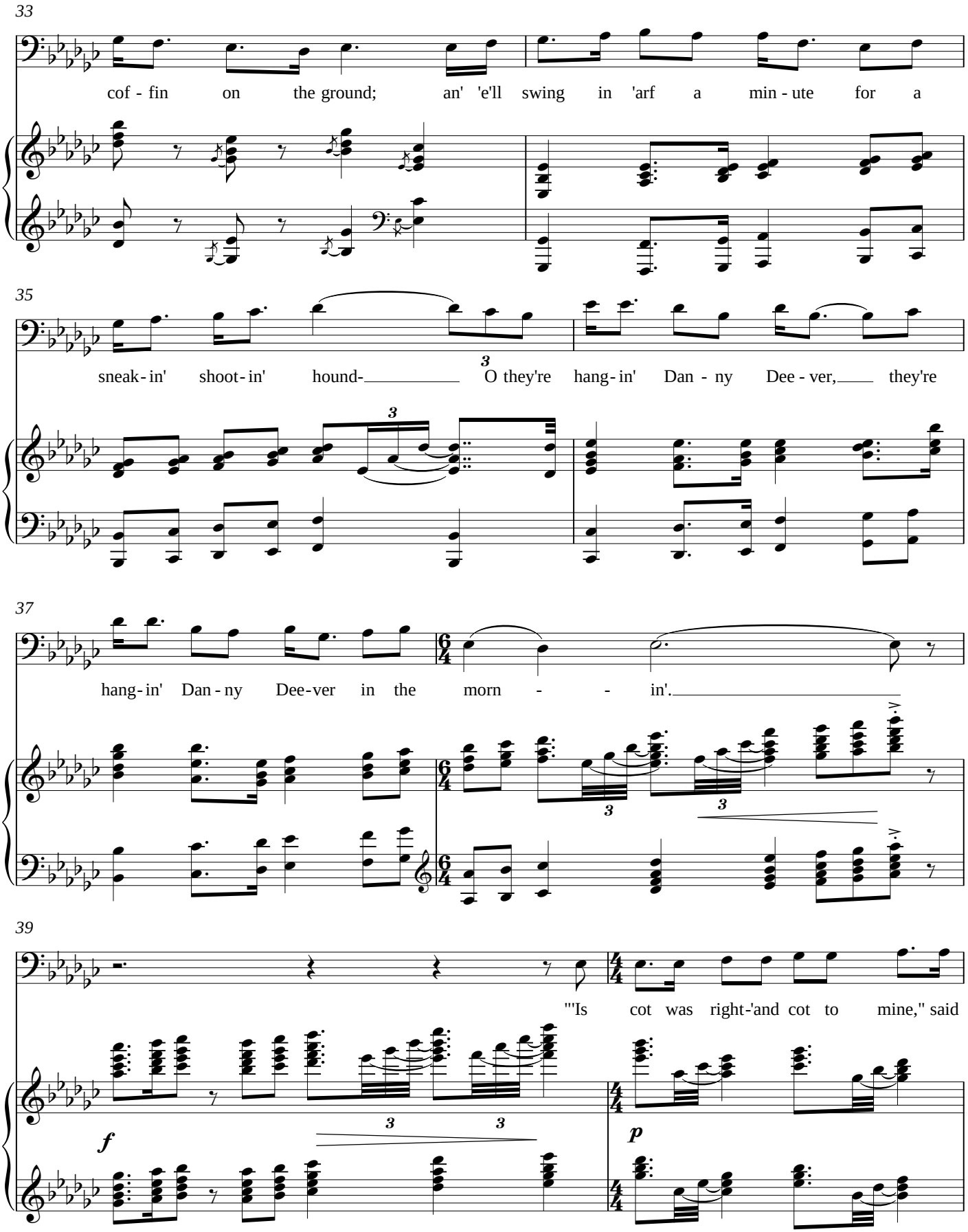
Danny Deever

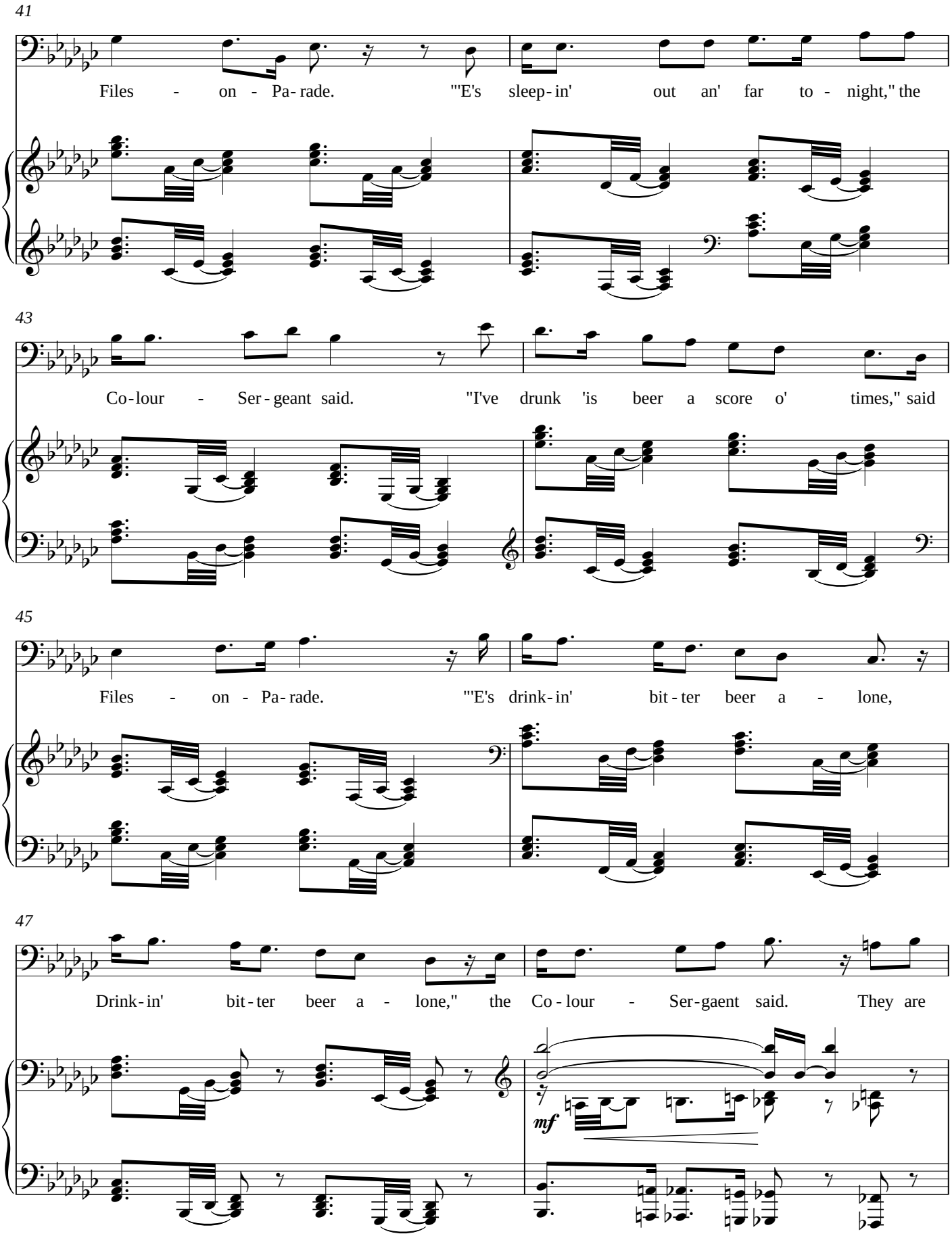


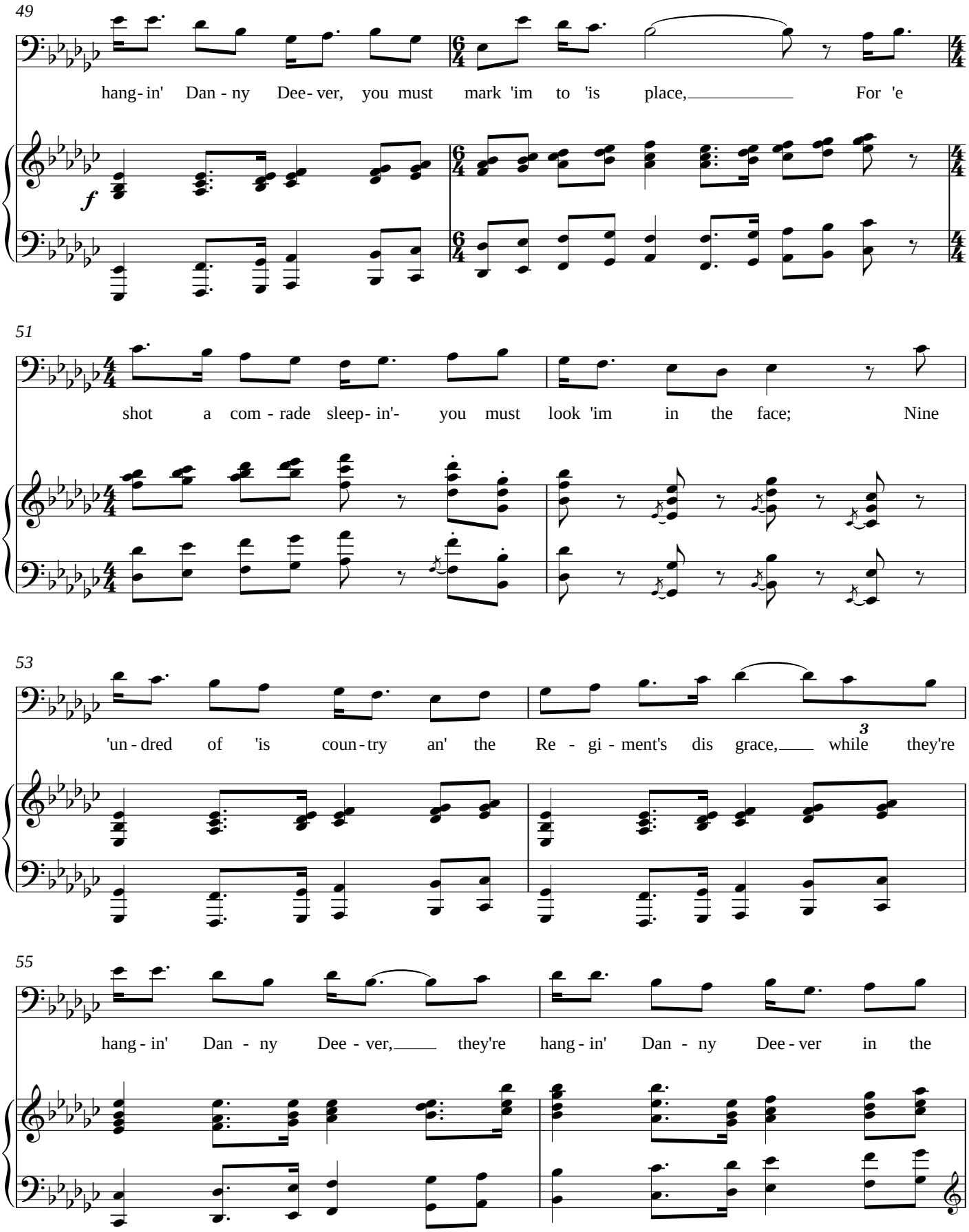

9
dread - in' what I've got to watch, dread - in' what I've got to watch," the
11
Co - lour - Ser - geant said. For they're hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, you can
mf molto sostenuto
13
hear the Dead March play, The Re - gi - ment's in 'ol - low square- they're
15
hang - in' him to - day; They've ta - ken of his but - tons off an'

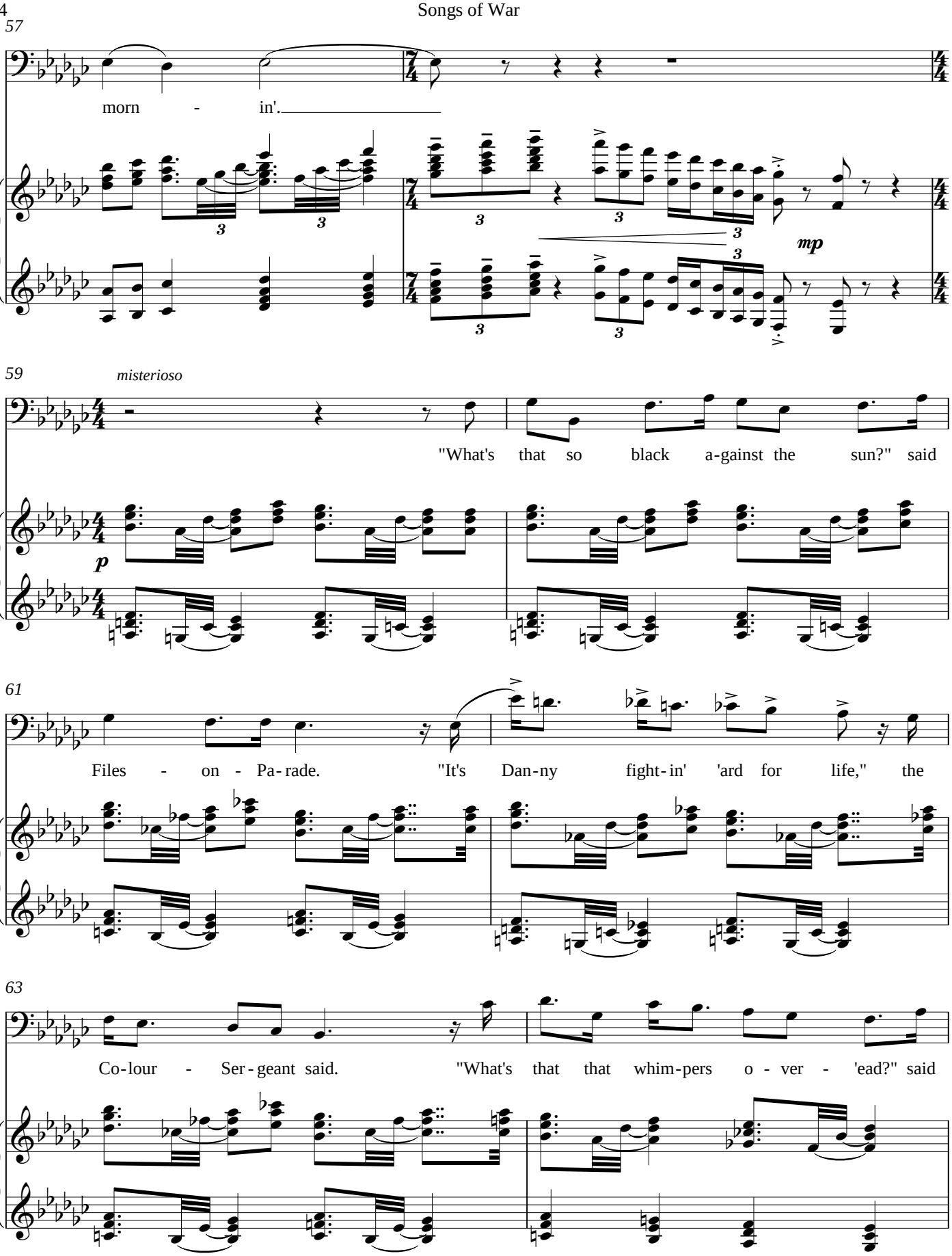

17
cut his stripes a - way, an' they're hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, they're
19
hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver in the mor - - nin'.
21
"What makes the rear - rank breathe so 'ard?" said
mf
23
Files - on - Pa - rade. "It's bit - ter cold, it's bit - ter cold," the

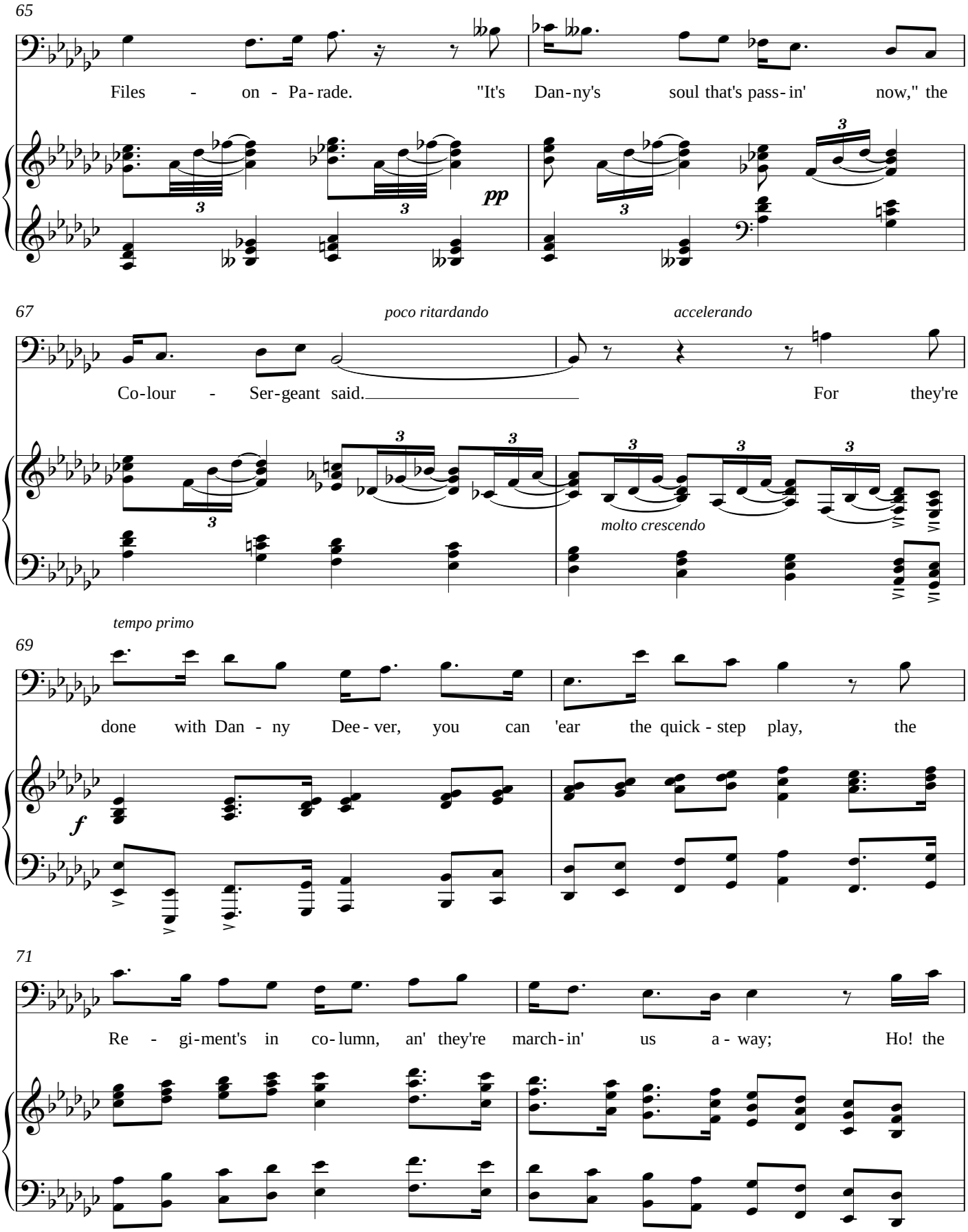

25
Co-lour - Ser-geant said. "What makes that front-rank man fall down?" said
27
Files - on - Pa- rade?" "A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun," the
29
Co-lour - Ser-geant said. They are hang-in' Dan - ny Dee-ver, they are
mf
31
march-in' of 'im round, they 'ave 'alt-ed Dan - ny Dee-ver by 'is

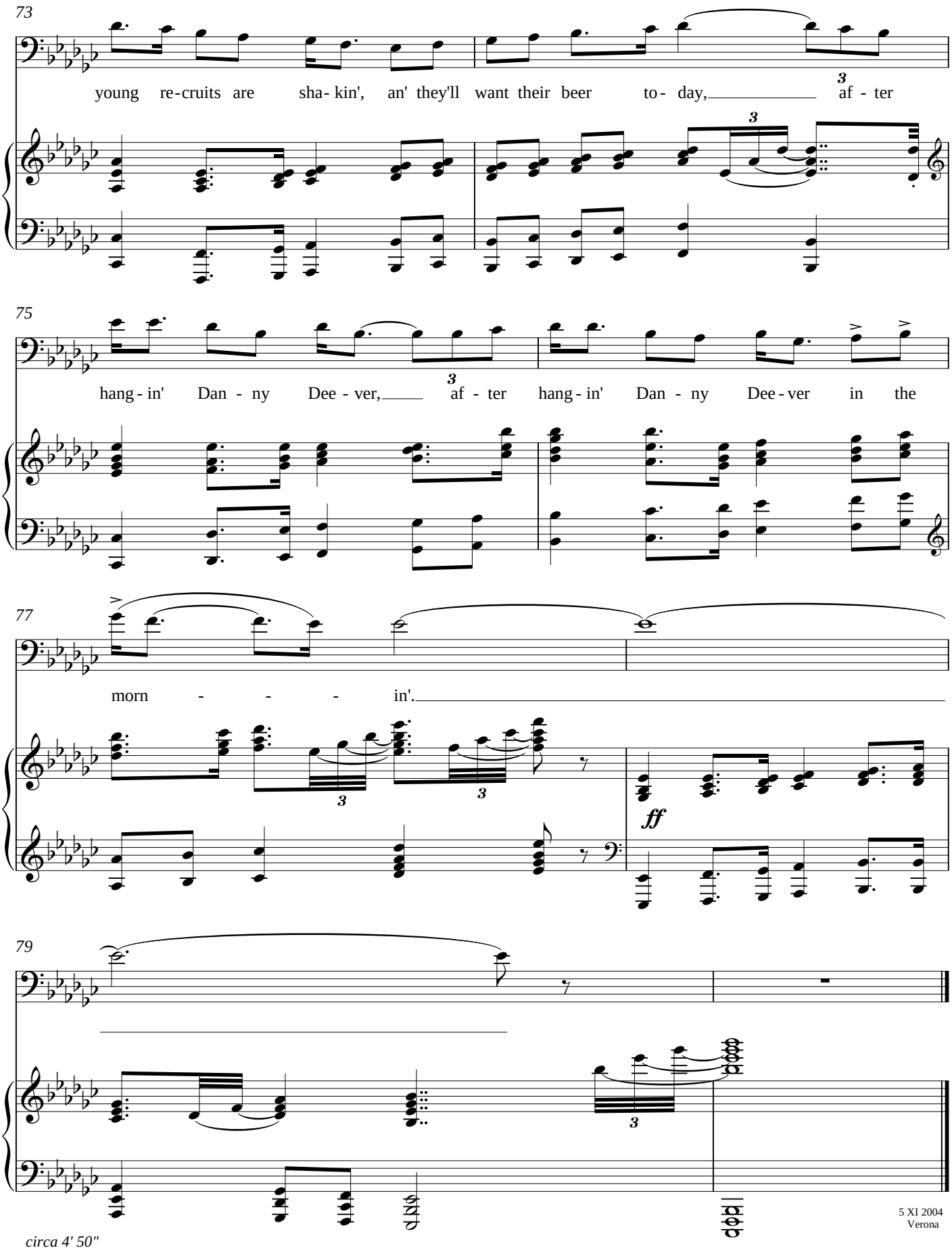

33
cof - fin on the ground; an' 'e'll swing in 'arf a min - ute for a
35
sneak - in' shoot - in' hound- O they're hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, they're
37
hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver in the morn - - in'.
39
"'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine," said
f
p


41
Files - on - Pa- rade. "'E's sleep- in' out an' far to - night," the
43
Co- lour - Ser- geant said. "I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times," said
45
Files - on - Pa- rade. "'E's drink- in' bit- ter beer a - lone,
47
Drink- in' bit- ter beer a - lone," the Co- lour - Ser- gaent said. They are
mf


49
hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, you must mark 'im to 'is place, For 'e
f
51
shot a com - rade sleep - in'- you must look 'im in the face; Nine
53
'un - dred of 'is coun - try an' the Re - gi - ment's dis grace, while they're
3
55
hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, they're hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver in the


57
morn - in'.
mp
59
misterioso
"What's that so black a-gainst the sun?" said
p
61
Files - on - Pa-rade. "It's Dan-ny fight-in' 'ard for life," the
63
Co-lour - Ser-geant said. "What's that that whim-pers o - ver - 'ead?" said


65
Files - on - Pa-rade. "It's Dan-ny's soul that's pass-in' now," the
pp
67
poco ritardando
accelerando
Co-lour - Ser-geant said. For they're
molto crescendo
tempo primo
69
done with Dan - ny Dee-ver, you can 'ear the quick-step play, the
f
71
Re - gi-ment's in co-lumn, an' they're march-in' us a-way; Ho! the


73
young re-cruits are sha- kin', an' they'll want their beer to- day, af - ter
75
hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver, af - ter hang - in' Dan - ny Dee - ver in the
77
morn - - - in'.
ff
79
circa 4' 50"
5 XI 2004
Verona

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915)

The Dead

♩ = 70

molto ritardando

7.

These hearts...

mf

blithely

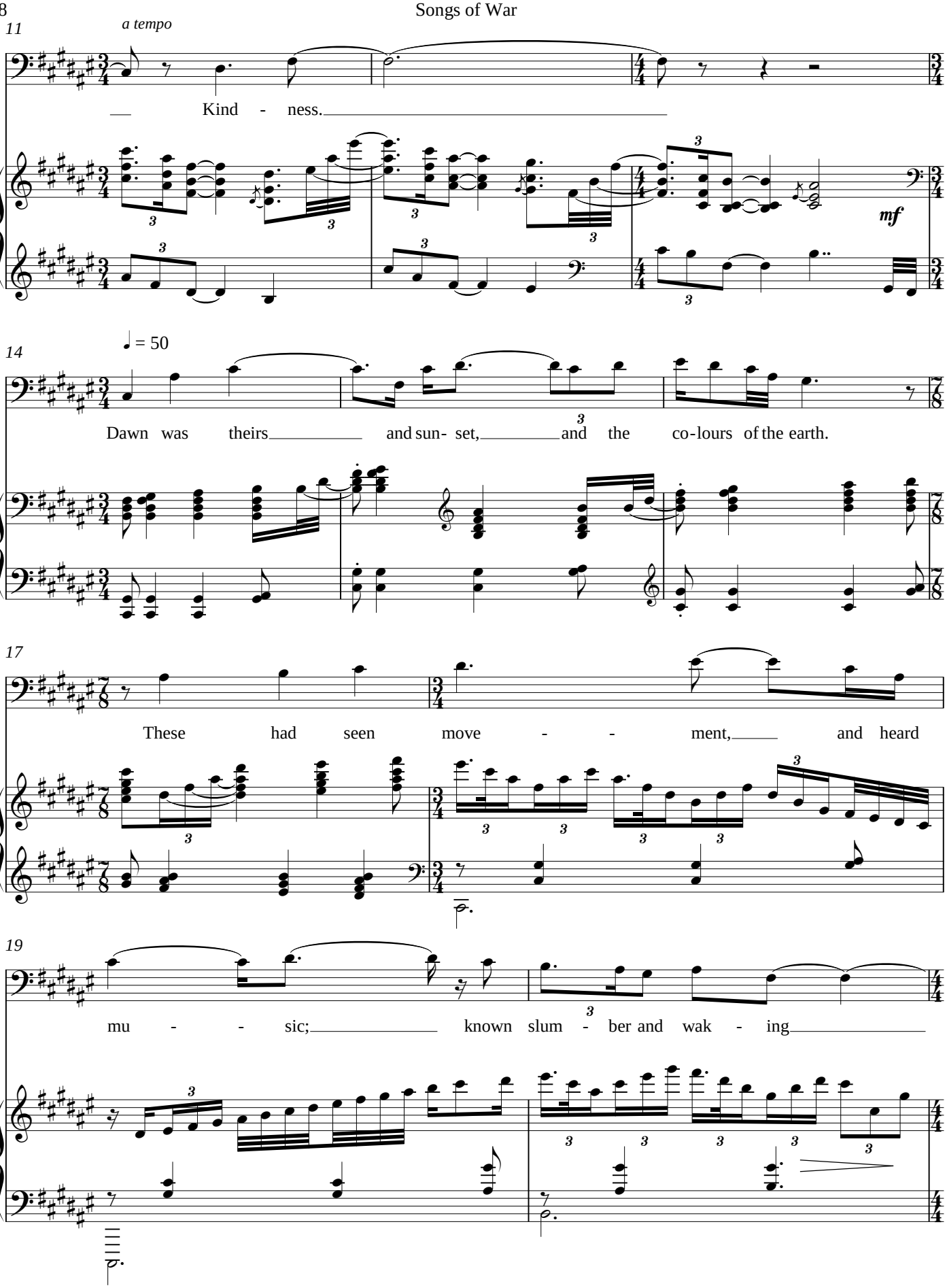
These hearts were wo-ven of hu-man joys and cares,

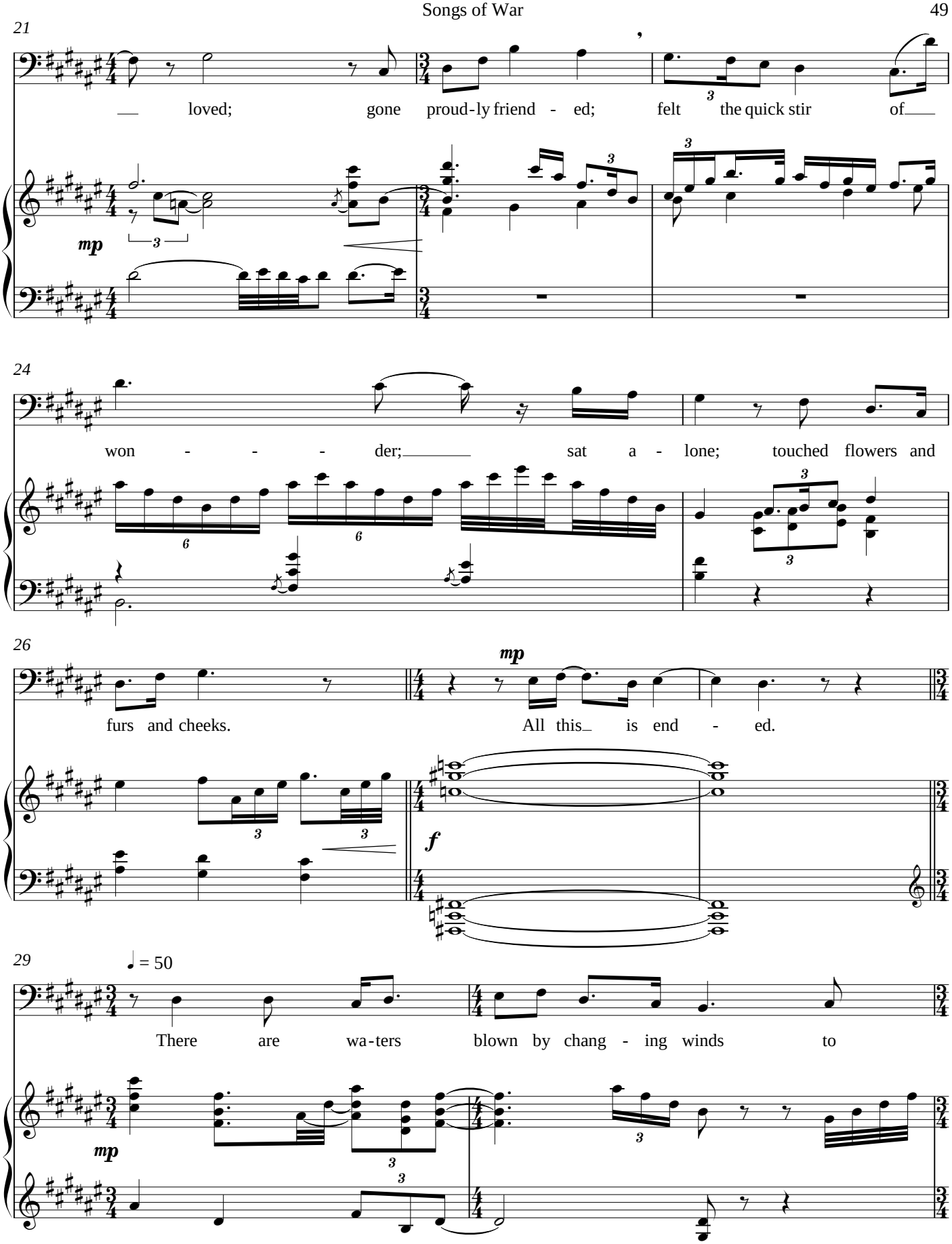
mp

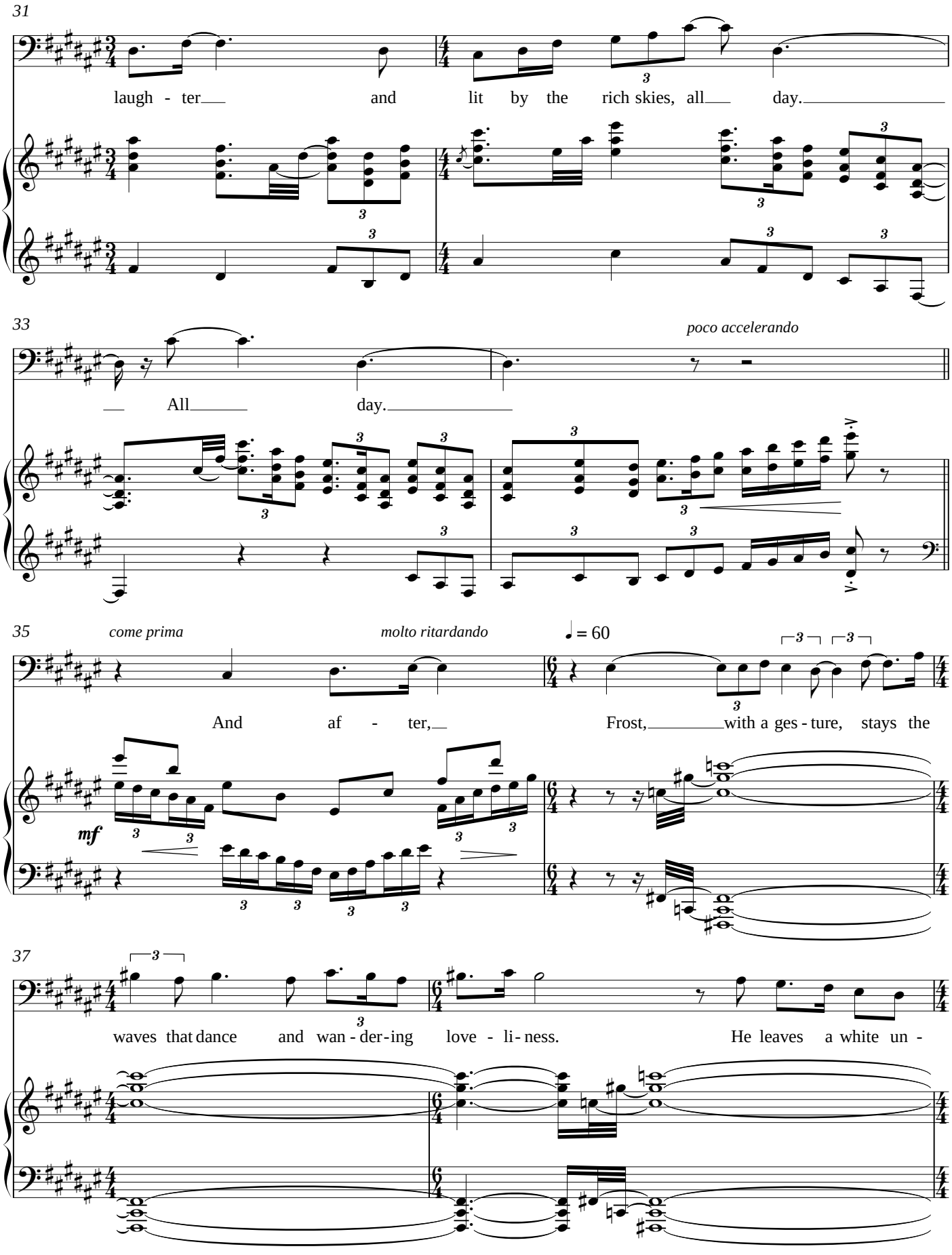
washed mar - ve-lous - ly with sor- row, swift to

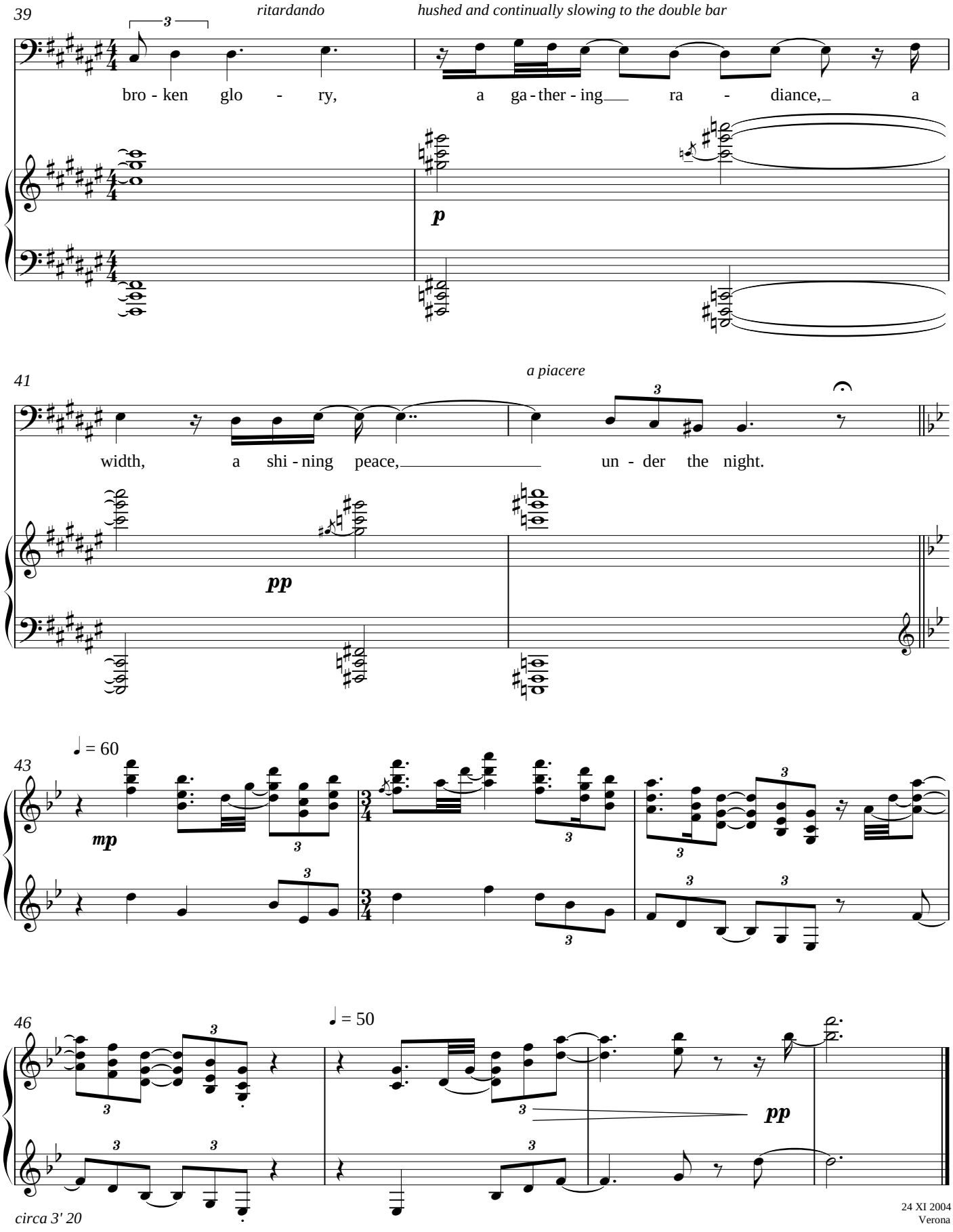
poco ritardando

mirth. The years have giv - en them kind - ness.


11
a tempo
Kind - ness.
mf
14
♩ = 50
Dawn was theirs and sun- set, and the co-lours of the earth.
17
These had seen move - - ment, and heard
19
mu - - sic; known slum - ber and wak - ing


21
loved; gone proud-ly friend - ed; felt the quick stir of
mp
24
won - - - der; sat a - lone; touched flowers and
26
furs and cheeks. All this is end - ed.
mp
f
29
♩ = 50
There are wa-ters blown by chang - ing winds to
mp


31
laugh - ter and lit by the rich skies, all day.
33
poco accelerando
All day.
35
come prima
molto ritardando
♩ = 60
And af - ter, Frost, with a ges - ture, stays the
mf
37
waves that dance and wan - der - ing love - li - ness. He leaves a white un -


39
ritardando
hushed and continually slowing to the double bar
bro - ken glo - ry, a ga - ther - ing ra - diance, a
p
41
a piacere
width, a shi - ning peace, un - der the night.
pp
43
♩ = 60
mp
46
♩ = 50
pp
circa 3' 20
24 XI 2004
Verona

In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

THOMAS HARDY

The Send-Off

Down the close, darkening lanes they sang their way
To the siding-shed,
And lined the train with faces grimly gay.
Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray
As men's are, dead.

Dull porters watched them, and a casual tramp
Stood staring hard,
Sorry to miss them from the upland camp.
Then, unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp
Winked to the guard.

So secretly, like wrongs hushed-up, they went.
They were not ours:
We never heard to which front these were sent.
Nor there if they yet mock what women meant
Who gave them flowers.

Shall we return to beatings of great bells
In wild train-loads?
A few, a few, too few for drums and yells,
May creep back, silent, to village wells
Up half-known roads.

WILFRED OWEN

Attack

At dawn the ridge emerges massed and dun
In the wild purple of the glow'ring sun,
Smouldering through spouts of drifting smoke that shroud
The menacing scarred slope; and, one by one,
Tanks creep and topple forward to the wire.
The barrage roars and lifts. Then, clumsily bowed
With bombs and guns and shovels and battle-gear,
Men jostle and climb to meet the bristling fire.
Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Dead Man's Dump

The plunging limbers over the shattered track
Racketed with their rusty freight,
Stuck out like many crowns of thorns,
And the rusty stakes like scepters old
To stay the flood of brutish men
Upon our brothers dear.

The wheels lurched over sprawled dead
But pained them not, though their bones crunched,
Their shut mouths made no moan.
They lie there huddled, friend and foeman,
Man born of man, and born of woman,
And shells go crying over them
From night till night and now.

Earth has waited for them,
All the time of their growth
Fretting for their decay:
Now she has them at last!
In the strength of their strength
Suspended – stopped and held.

What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit?
Earth! have they gone into you!
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
Is their soul's sack
Emptied of God-ancestralled essences.
Who hurled them out? Who hurled?

None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,
Or stood aside for the half used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee
Drained the wild honey of their youth.

What of us who, flung on the shrieking pyre,
Walk, our usual thoughts untouched,
Our lucky limbs as on ichor fed,
Immortal seeming ever?
Perhaps when the flames beat loud on us,
A fear may choke in our veins
And the startled blood may stop.

The air is loud with death,
The dark air spurts with fire,
The explosions ceaseless are.
Timelessly now, some minutes pass,
These dead strode time with vigorous life,
Till the shrapnel called 'An end!'
But not all. In bleeding pangs
Some borne on stretchers dreamed of home,
Dear things, war-blotted from their hearts.

Maniac Earth! howling and flying, your bowel
Seared by the jagged fire, the iron love,
The impetuous storm of savage love.
Dark Earth! dark Heavens! Swinging in chemic smoke,
What dead are born when you kiss each soundless soul
With lightning and thunder from your minded heart,
Which man's self dug, and his blind fingers loosed?

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face;
His shook shoulders slipped their load,
But when they bent to look again
The drowning soul was sunk too deep
For human tenderness.

They left this dead with the other dead,
Stretched at the cross roads.
Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie,
The lid over each eye,
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silence.

Here is one not long dead;
His dark hearing caught our far wheels,
And the choked soul stretched weak hands
To reach the living world the far wheels said,
The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
Crying through the suspense of the far torturing wheels
Swift for the end to break
Or the wheels to break,

Cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight.

Will they come? Will they ever come?
Even as the mixed hoofs of the mules,
The quivering-bellied mules,
And the rushing wheels all mixed
With his tortured upturned sight.
So we crashed round the bend,
We heard his weak scream,
We heard his very last sound,
And our wheels grazed his dead face.

ISAAC ROSENBERG

Gethsemane (1914-18)

The Garden called Gethsemane
In Picardy it was,
And there the people came to see
The English soldiers pass.

We used to pass – we used to pass
Or halt, as it might be,
And ship our masks in case of gas
Beyond Gethsemane.

The Garden called Gethsemane
It held a pretty lass,
But all the time she talked to me
I prayed my cup might pass.

The officer sat on the chair,
The men lay on the grass,
And all the time we halted there,
I prayed my cup might pass.

It didn't pass – it didn't pass –
It didn't pass from me.
I drank it when we met the gas
Beyond Gethsemane!

RUDYARD KIPLING

Danny Deever

'What are the bugles blowin' for? Said Files-on-Parade.
'To turn you out, to turn you out," the Colour-Sergeant said.
'What makes you look so white, so white?' said Files-on-Parade.
'I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March play,
The Regiment's in 'ollow square – they're hangin' him to-day;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,
An' they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

'What makes the rear-rank breathe so hard?' said Files-on-Parade.
'It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold,' the Cokour-Sergeant said.
'What makes that front-rank man fall down,' said Files-on-Parade.
'A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,
They 'ave 'alted Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;
An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound –
O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

''Is cot was right-'and cot to mine,' said Files-on-Parade.
''E's sleepin' out and far to-night,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
'I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times,' said Files-on-Parade.
''E's drinkin' bitter beer alone,' the Colour Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,
For 'e shot a comrade sleepin' – you must look 'im in the face;
Nine 'undred of 'is country an' the Regiment's disgrace,
While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

'What's that so black agin the sun?' said Files-on-Parade.
'It's Danny fightin' 'ard for life,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
'What's that that whimpers over'ead?' said Files-on-Parade.
'It's Danny's soul that's passin' now,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're done with Danny Deever, you can 'ear the quickstep play,
The Regiment's in column, an' they're marchin' us away;
Ho! The young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer to-day,
After hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

RUDYARD KIPLING

The Dead

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvelously with sorrow, swift to mirth,
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

RUPERT BROOKE

This cycle of seven songs for baritone and piano – Songs of War - was composed in Verona, Italy, in November 2004, with a thought to the horrors of war as were catalogued by these World War One poets and as the same repeated horrors are exposed in the news of today. The sentiment of Thomas Hardy's poem that new lives and loves do indeed go on is apt, as he writes that "War's annals will cloud into night ere their story die." Therefore, the sentiment is reprised musically in the final song. Thus the cycle is both a litany of horrors drawn from the ugly beauty of these poets' works and a statement of faith as well, by which the horrors of war itself are mitigated by the truth that life continues, and perhaps the world becomes a little better as the venues for war recede and become fewer and fewer historically. Certainly living in Germany and working in Italy, both nations which shared a fascist ideology only sixty years ago is demonstration that not only lives and loves continue, but that the world indeed becomes a better and more peaceful place as the years pass.

Gary Bachlund
24 November 2004